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MEMOIR
OF
SEPTIMUS SEARS.

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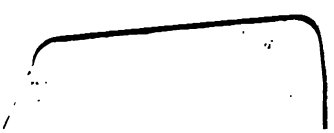

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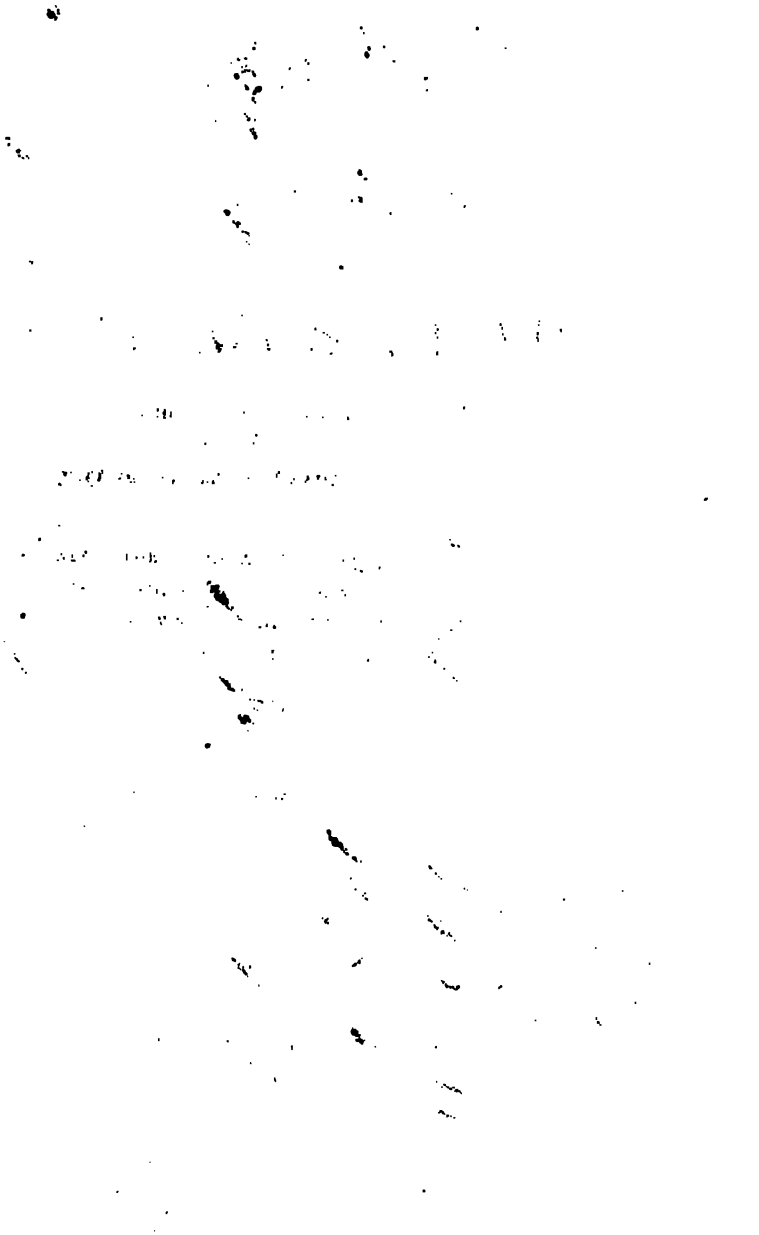
Yours sincerely
J. Sears

Yours sincerely
D. Sears



MEMOIR

OF THE

LIFE AND LABOURS

OF THE LATE

SEPTIMUS SEARS;

WHO WAS FOR THIRTY-FIVE YEARS

Minister of the Gospel of Christ, at Clifton, Bedfordshire,

AND ALSO THE ORIGINATOR, AND, UNTIL THE TIME OF HIS DEATH, EDITOR OF THE MONTHLY MAGAZINES KNOWN AS "THE LITTLE GLEANER," AND "THE SOWER."

"*To whom coming, as unto a living stone.*"—I PETER iii. 4.

"*Him that cometh to* ME *I will in nowise cast out.*"—JOHN vi. 37.

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PREFACE.

IN sending forth the Memoir of the greatly beloved and lamented SEPTIMUS SEARS, we feel that a few words in reference to two or three matters connected therewith may not be out of place. Not that any apology is needed for the production of the book, since we feel sure it will be accorded a hearty reception by a wide circle of friends to whom Mr. Sears was well known as a preacher and writer, and by many who highly esteemed him on account of the spiritual profit they received through him as a labourer in the Lord's vineyard. And to these, perhaps, the first word of explanation may suitably be given in answer to the question, How is it that the Memoir did not appear some twelve, or more, months ago? Our reply then is, it was at first

expected that matter for it would be readily found so as to get it completed within a year of Mr. Sears' death. But as he had not left any manuscript in the shape of an autobiography or diary except a few notes made public directly after he died, and as Mrs. Sears was so completely prostrated by the shock she had experienced as not to be able to take any active part in the compilation of the work, it was at one time almost decided to abandon it. The thought however occurred that we might perhaps glean from various sources some few things which could be put together so as to form a small memento of our departed friend. With this view some of his early writings were obtained, and although we knew that in his latter years he much regretted the style in which they were written, yet since they contain a faithful and clear account of his conversion and early experience, we concluded to gather from them such facts as would help to form the Memoir, without re-printing what we are sure Mr. Sears would have objected to had he been consulted on that point. Therefore, in omitting much which they contain in a way of comment on different parts of scripture and experience, and in altering some of his youthful and unduly animated expressions, we have not

sought to garble what he there said, but have endeavoured to collect such matter therefrom as in our feeble judgment will be likely to prove both good and profitable to our readers; at the same time we have sought to give it, as near as possible, in his own words, and as we believe he would have sent it forth if he had given it in an abridged form. This, with other gleanings from his sermons, &c., we have, after much anxious labour and many delays, been at last able to put before you in the present form, hoping that though the work has been long delayed yet it may now meet with good acceptance and bring forth satisfactory results. In the next place we wish it to be clearly understood that although we could not possibly avoid all reference to those painful circumstances which so embittered Mr. Sears' last days upon earth, yet no unnecessary mention of them has been introduced, but in certain instances they are so interwoven with other matters recorded that a reference to them is essential to the right understanding of the connection. In fact so desirous are we to avoid any unnecessary unpleasantness on this point, that some of his secret exercises, and also of his letters we have in hand, have not been given, in order that there should be no semblance of a wish on our

part for the rekindling of the angry fires of strife. Our object in sending forth the book is not a vindicatory one, but, as far as he is concerned, solely "In memoriam" of our deceased friend. Then, as to the letters of Mr. Sears which appear in the work, they are a few which we have selected with the hope that they may prove acceptable and useful to somewho may read them; but for the reason already assigned, and not wishing to swell the volume beyond the meditated size, we have kept back a number which in themselves are a valuable transcript of the spirit of the man.

We now desire to thank those kind friends who have rendered us much and very valuable assistance in the compiling of the work; at the same time we feel sure that they with ourselves have found it to be, both in respect of a feeling of sympathy with Mrs. Sears (whose right the work is) and of love to the memory of the deceased servant of Christ, a labour of love. That many imperfections will be found in the editorial part of the business we do not doubt; but such as it is we send it forth, commending the whole to the candour of our readers and the notice of the Lord. That He whose blessing alone can make it profitable, may cause it to prove a word in season to the hearts of many in

private, and of some timely service in the cause of His Zion in general, that Christ may thereby be magnified in the experience of His redeemed, is the sincere prayer of one, who desires to hold before Him, and in His Church, the position of

A SERVANT.

INTRODUCTION.

"THE memory of the just is blessed."—Such is the testimony of inspiration, and such, so far as words go, the common opinion of mankind. But then, who are the just? When the judgment is set and the books opened in the great day of Almighty God this weighty question will be distinctly and eternally settled; for the searcher of hearts himself, Jesus Christ the righteous, will sever the wicked from among the just, and every eye shall perceive the difference between him that has served God and him that has served him not. Meanwhile we live in a world of darkness and confusion, wherein one event happeneth to the righteous and the wicked. And though God executes judgment in the earth (Jer. ix. 24), His ways are so unsearchable, and there is so much darkness and short-sightedness about the best of men, that very different estimates are formed, and very great mistakes made concerning the Lord's dispensations and the characters of individuals. Witness the case of Job, and the errors of his three friends, whom

yet we have reason to regard as wise men, and possessed of the fear of God. Again, there is such deadly enmity in the world against God and His holy truth, that the just, who reflect His image and are witnesses for His truth, often get a curse instead of a blessing from many of their fellow creatures. And particularly is this the case in a man's own lifetime. Jeremiah says: "I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury, yet every one of them doth curse me;" and the other prophets met with similar treatment in their day. In after ages, when the tongue of Jeremiah was silent in the grave and men had nothing to fear from its holy denunciations, they could build and garnish his sepulchre, while they crucified his Lord, and would have swept his fellow servant Paul from the face of the earth, as one who was not fit to live.

Yet, in spite of the mistakes made by saints in their shortsightedness, and the calumnies scattered by the haters of the godly (for he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked), it remains a truth that the memory of the just is blessed, and those whose hearts are right with God find a blessing in treasuring up recollections of the godly dead. And, knowing this, we have felt a pleasure in preparing for publication a record of the life and labours of the late Septimus Sears.

The painful circumstances which attended his latter days have suggested to us the above reflec-

tions, which we would affectionately commend to the notice of any reader on whose mind there may still be any impression unfavourable to the departed as a faithful man of truth. Vague reports produced similar impressions with respect to him on our own mind; but they vanished upon a closer acquaintance with him, and gave place to feelings of tender Christian love and most unfeigned esteem. Still the currency of such reports, and the bias which they have wrought in the minds of some sincere lovers of truth, have made us feel that a slight introductory sketch of his writings and ministry might suitably commence this little volume. It will not be necessary to go largely into details; for a concise account of his teaching remains to us in his own well nigh dying words, in an address to his church, which we quote in the following pages. Ponder it well, sincere Christian reader; and, laying aside the testimony of man, compare it with the inspired word of revelation. We believe that you will then see that the key to any uncomfortable suspicions that you may have lies not in the faulty doctrine or expressions of faithful Septimus Sears, but in one of the two reasons alleged above for the fact that the memory of the just is sometimes cursed instead of blessed, viz., the shortsightedness of saints and the malice of sinners.

As a writer and editor he is perhaps as widely known as any man of recent date in the Church of Christ.

For more than a quarter of a century he employed his pen for the good of souls, ever aiming to put pure truth before his fellow man; and in doing this he had an aptitude of expression which rendered his unassuming productions acceptable to young and old, rich and poor, learned and illiterate.

His earliest publications were a relation of that gracious work of the Lord upon his soul whereby he was brought from death to life, from darkness to light, and from the rigid bondage of the law into the sweet enjoyment of gospel liberty. He then stated in his own language the inward exercises of his heart, which found an echo in the hearts of others; and though it must be admitted that there was in his early writings a form of speech which savoured of harshness and excitement, and which in riper years he discarded, yet he never had to retract any part of that spiritual teaching which was indelibly stamped upon his heart by divine power. Indeed, however justly his words at that date called for criticism, none can have read his "Songs in Summer and Wailings in Winter" with any measure of gracious discernment without feeling that he knew the malady of sin, and that he had also, by saving faith, realised the efficacious remedy in the blood and righteousness of Christ. In his afflictions the Lord's testimonies were his delight and his counsellors, so that out of the eater came forth meat, not only in the shape of preached discourses, but in occasional or periodical tracts,

such as "Crumbs from Clifton Chapel," and a great variety of pamphlets and leaflets which found a way into many homes and hearts, where truth had not been heretofore known.

Nor was he merely a prose writer; he was wont to turn his thoughts into verse, for which he had a fair gift. As early as 1850 he published poems and hymns entitled "Breathings of the Heart," and without claiming for them a place amongst high class poetry, we may say that they contained words of truth and soberness in a very creditable poetic form. His good wishes for the young, which he often expressed in rhyme, were ever replete with new ideas, so that in this particular line he had, perhaps, few competitors.

If he can be said to have favoured in his line of doctrine any class of men more than another, it was the Puritan writers; he had often read their works to profit, and therefore justly esteemed them, and imbibed their spirit. But as a preacher and teacher he followed no man. "What saith the Scripture?" was his inquiry, and they were ever his infallible rule and guide. He cared not to adopt words and phrases because they were used among the churches with which he was more immediately connected; but, daring to be singular, he drank water out of his own cistern, and running water out of his own well (Prov. v. 10), not the mere emanations of a well-cultivated and fertile mind, but the bubblings of a graciously exercised

heart, which taught his mouth, added learning to his lips, and enabled him, by means of his pen, to speak to the "regions beyond" him, where his voice never could have reached. His great concern was to obey the apostolic injunction, "Preach the Word." He felt the Bible to be God's Word, and desired that everyone might revere it as such; and while he knew well by his own experience that the Holy Ghost must wield that sword to cause it to divide "soul and spirit, joints and marrow," and to become "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12), he also knew that, as a steward, he was required to be faithful; and therefore shunned not to declare all the counsel of God alike to sinner and saint, to professor and possessor.

The main points of his ministry which he recapitulates in the address above referred to, are the infinite and inflexible justice of God in His holy law; the awful consequences of the fall as seen in the spiritual death and total depravity of all men by nature, and in the eternal vengeance that must overtake all graceless sinners; the necessity of regeneration, repentance and faith; the glorious person of Immanuel, God with us, the representative at God's right hand of all the household of faith, the great covenant Head through whom God can be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; the love of Jesus as set forth in the free invitations of the Gospel to the sinful, the poor, the

burdened, the thirsty, the lost; the precious promises made in God's Word to certain characters; the object for awakened souls to seek after, namely, the reception by faith of the record which God has given of His Son in the Gospel; the fountain head of all the blessings of salvation, and the cause of all right experience, namely, the electing love of God irrespective of all merit or demerit on the part of the elect; the privileges of believers as adopted children of God; the gospel obligation which lies upon all who are saved by Christ to seek grace from Christ that they may live unto Christ, yielding their members as instruments unto righteousness; and, finally, the mind of God concerning the future coming, and kingdom, and glory of the Lord Jesus" (1 Thess. i. 10).

Upon some of these points we wish to dwell a little in this place, since it was his faithful inculcation of them that exposed Mr. Sears to misrepresentation and trial. When preaching the terrible threats of God's holy law he strove earnestly to tread in the footsteps of one who said, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." It was no part of his creed that the sole business of a gospel minister is to preach comfort to saints, with the idea "if a stray arrow strikes any unconverted sinner, well and good; but my business is not with them." No. In the pulpit he felt to be face to face with the conscience of every hearer, and endeavoured so plainly, closely, and faithfully

to deal with the conscience of every natural man as to be pure from the blood of all (Acts xx. 26). In so doing he felt convinced that he was not giving an undue prominence to one or two isolated scriptures, but preaching in harmony with the revealed will of God. A sense of the value of the soul of man, of his own responsibility as a spiritual guide, of the brevity of time and the dread realities of eternity, made him particularly zealous in this part of his work; a gracious superiority to the fear of man preserved him from being fettered therein; and a solid spiritual acquaintance with the grand truths of divine sovereignty, unconditional election, and absolute grace prevented him from leading his hearers into any delusive notions of human merit or free-will. On one occasion he remarked to us in conversation, "I can honestly assert that all I have ever said when addressing unconverted sinners only amounts to this, 'Now consider this, ye that forget God; lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver.'" Natural people who attended his ministry could not say to him, "You never have anything to say to us." And his spiritual hearers were preserved from thinking that ten minutes in the pulpit spent upon outsiders were ten minutes lost. Perhaps they had noticed that a considerable part of the Epistle to the Romans is of this character, where the apostle turns aside from the saints at Rome to spend a whole chapter in argumentative expostulation with

hardened, impenitent Gentiles, and self-righteous Jews. (See Romans ii.)

Nor was he less anxious to bring forth the sweet invitations and promises of the Gospel, as suited to the needy, naked, undone sinner who has lost all hope from the law and all help in self, and who, from an experimental sense of his perilous condition, fears that there is no help for him in God. All such he tenderly sought to encourage, pointing out to them that their very convictions and cries for mercy were marks in their favour, and pledges of better things to come. And in this difficult part of a minister's work he seems to us to have been gifted with peculiar wisdom and faithfulness. The comfort which he administered to an awakened sinner was a bracing cordial, not a sleeping draught. Like good John Bunyan's Evangelist he would give such a one a parchment roll, wherein was written, "Flee from the wrath to come!" To one who could not see yonder wicket gate, but only a shining light, he would say, "Keep that light in thine eye, and go up directly thereto; so shalt thou see the gate at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do." In plain words, knowing the universal proneness of sinners to build on something different from the one foundation which God has laid in Zion, and to settle down in self or even feed on inward grace received instead of a full and complete salvation in Jesus Christ, he was not content that souls should be simply

encouraged by the hope of being in the right way; his anxiety was to conduct the pilgrim to the cross, and to espouse his hearers and readers as chaste virgins unto Christ (2 Cor. xi. 2). He would that none who seemed to be under convictions should stop short of the city of refuge, or die by the hand of the avenger of blood. Hart's language was his—

> "Fly then, awakened sinner fly,
> Your case admits no stay:
> The fountain's opened now for sin,
> Come, wash your guilt away."

Did this imply that either he or our favourite poet believed that the sinner had any innate power to come? Verily no; both would have scorned such a thought. But knowing that it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, they strove to preach to the full the preaching that He had bidden them, and humbly left the issue in the hands of that blessed Spirit who alone can make effectual a warning to a sinner, an invitation to a seeker, or an exhortation to a saint.

By a sweet experience of his own he was made well acquainted with the finished work of Christ, and this was the grand theme of his ministry. He delighted to show how God could be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; how sin was put away, divine wrath appeased, the demands of justice met, and the law made honourable by

the meritorious life and substitutionary death of Him who stood surety for a stranger; how the great head of the church was made sin for His body; how His obedience makes all His members judicially righteous before God; and how chosen sinners, being made willing in the day of Jesu's power to accept of this great salvation, are justified by faith, and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there are preachers who have great gifts to set forth these lofty truths of the everlasting Gospel, and whose sermons apparently glitter with the name, the offices, the blood, the righteousness, the grace, the glory of the Son of God: but then they miss that sweet and all-important secret—Christ in the heart; in other words they fail to trace out the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost in a believer's soul. We have known what it is to be under the influence of such a ministry, and have bitterly proved that in the end it is profitless and delusive. It would be most unfair to class Mr. Sears with such teachers, for while he was so clear upon the finished work of Christ, he at the same time earnestly contended for the power and personality of the blessed Spirit. He vindicated and unfolded his gracious work in convincing of sin, implanting grace, producing faith to the saving of the soul, revealing the things of Christ, and bearing His infallible witness within to the believer's sonship. Experience and scripture taught him, and

led him to teach others, that the sole reason why the gospel seed flourishes and endures in some ground, and bears no fruit in other, is that in the former case it is wetted with the showers of heaven, nourished by Him who has said I will be as the dew unto Israel; while in the latter case, because it lacks this moisture, it is caught away by Satan, withered by temptation, or choked by sins and cares. The work of the Spirit was therefore dear to his heart, and prominent in his ministry. And yet so unflinchingly did he declare unbelief to be a damning sin, and faith to be necessary to salvation, that he was charged with implying some ability in the natural man to perform spiritual acts. Now the fact is that few, if any, knew better than he how low man has fallen; but he also knew that as faith is a grace freely bestowed of God upon the heirs of promise, so unbelief is man's sin inherited from his first parent Adam; he knew that the same voice which has said, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," has also said, "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself; he shall be holden with the cords of his sins;" and feeling unbelief to be the mother of all sins, he warned his hearers of its deadly influence.

The great and blessed truth of election is often a source of great trial to seeking souls. Or, to speak more wisely, not the truth of election, but armies of election doubters, as Bunyan has

it, trouble the coming sinner. To such Mr. Sears' message was in substance this: "Do you stand in need of Christ? Are you willing to come to Him if you may? If so, your business is not at present with the secrets of the book of life; you have a gospel warrant to go with all your sins and woes to Jesus as a promising and inviting Saviour. Fly to Jesus, who has promised to cast out none that come to Him. And when you have reached the shelter of his cross, and received into your heart the sweet testimony of His Spirit and Word that your sins are all forgiven, you will have satisfactory proof of your election, for none but the elect are ever drawn by the Father to the feet of His dear Son. To your present cry, 'What must I do to be saved?' I have but one old-fashioned answer to give: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!'"

The last feature of his ministry that we here wish to touch upon was his continual inculcation of the truth that those who can see their election, and have the witness within that they are saved by the Lord Jesus from the wrath to come, are privileged to serve Him, and are bound by love and filial duty so to do. "Those who are saved," he would say, "should seek grace from Jesus that they may serve." "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." It is no small thing to be able

to add that he still more powerfully preached this same truth by the example of his own godly and devoted life; and besought the Lord in private prayer that he would enable the members of the church to live fruitful lives, to the honour of His grace and doctrine. He faithfully testified that the pathway of obedience is the pathway in which blessings are found, and in proof thereof would quote the words of his divine Master, "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him."

Besides his original writings, he supplied the Church of God with editions of some valuable standard works in a cheap and portable form. Many of the choice sermons of Ralph Erskine were brought out by him some years since, in monthly numbers, which were highly prized by those who, through affliction and other circumstances, could not get to the house of worship.

But now the dear man rests from his labours, and his works follow him. May the Lord God of Elijah in mercy fill up the gap in Zion's walls, and may He grant that many who have listlessly read his sermons and writings may at length find them return upon their consciences as the words of the wise, which "are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd."

We had written the above introductory chapter when we received from a friend the following remarks, which we gladly insert here as a suitable supplement to what we have already said. They come from one who knew Mr. Sears intimately for a period of thirty-five years :—

"If I were asked what I considered the leading features of Mr. Sears' character, I should say his childlike faith in God, and his patient continuance in good works. The involuntary expression that passed my lips when standing with a young relative by the mortal remains of our dear friend, was this,—'Whose faith follow'; and from that time to the present, the thought has strengthened, that in many notable ways he was an example that all, whether young or old, would do well to follow.

"It may be noticed, in reading of his early spiritual exercises, how implicitly he believed every word of Scripture, and how thoroughly those passages which set forth God's judgment against sin had their weight and effect upon his conscience. There was no reasoning away nor smoothing down the force of such words; he received them as the words of God, and bowed low in the dust under their awful meaning. It was by reason of this deep experience that he was enabled in after days to point out so thoroughly the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and probe the depths of its wounds with a view to their ultimate healing. In the same spirit of childlike faith he received in due time the word

of promise and reconciliation, believing it to be, as indeed it was, the message of peace from the living God to his afflicted soul. Thus it was, the barriers of unbelief being removed by the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, that peace flowed into his soul like a river, and he was enabled experimentally to declare that there is peace with God for every sin-stricken soul that believeth in Jesus.

"Spiritual life thus begun must necessarily show itself in the daily walk and conversation; and so it was with our friend. Whatever he did was undertaken in the spirit of faith and prayer, and hence he was not made ashamed, was not disappointed nor confounded. His undertakings seemed always to succeed. In proposing new plans he always desired the assurance that from their nature he might expect the blessing of God upon them, and having obtained that, all his efforts were directed to their accomplishment. His constant prayer in his family circle was for divine guidance in all things, and a petition often uttered was: 'Lord, make us right, and keep us right.' His delight truly was in the Lord; and in many striking instances the Lord gave him the desire of his heart.

"Mr. Sears' patient continuance in well doing was very remarkable; the more so when the state of his health and the sufferings he endured are borne in mind. Nothing was allowed to stand in the way of the many serious duties which daily came upon

him. In all these, whether in his family, amongst his people, in his study, or in the pulpit, there was no flagging, but constant and well-directed effort.

"A large family circle, not his own kindred, called daily for thoughtful labour, and this was cheerfully and thoroughly performed. All was undertaken in the spirit of prayer and the light of the Word of God, which he daily read and expounded to those about him.

"It will be gathered from the Memoir that the early days of Mr. Sears were too much overshadowed by bodily affliction to admit of thoroughness in the matter of education. But as strength and health were given to him, he set himself in the same persistent manner as in other things to remedy this defect. He sought by judicious reading to store his mind with useful knowledge; and the study of the Puritan divines, next to the sacred Scriptures, was his great delight, and gave a peculiar tone and character to his preaching. To enable himself to profit as far as possible by these studies, and to fit himself as an instrument for the work of the ministry of the Word, he acquired a considerable knowledge of the Greek Testament, and thus became able to appreciate the delicate shades of meaning as well as the force and power conveyed by the words of the original language, which it pleased the Holy Spirit to adopt for the setting forth of divine truth.

"It may be interesting to note in this connection

that finding from time to time he came into contact with Christians and others speaking French, he set himself diligently to master that language, and he had the satisfaction not only of speaking and writing but of preaching the everlasting Gospel and leading the prayers and praises of Christian people in that language during some visits which he made to France.

"There was one most important practice that Mr. Sears early established amongst his people which should certainly not be overlooked. It was the patient and systematic reading and expounding of the Word of God. This he carried on for many years, taking up and reading book after book to the great profit of his people as well as himself, as they learned in that way the breadth, fulness, and harmony of divine truth, as connected with the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the future glory of saints. Mr. Sears spent much time in his study, engaged either with his pen, with a view to publication or in preparation for the pulpit. As a change from his room many will remember that it was his frequent habit to walk in one or two paths in his garden, his only book there being his Bible, and frequent were the pauses in the reading, that the teaching of the Holy Spirit might be supplicated and the hidden depths of the divine Word opened up. Many can testify to the richness and freshness of the views of truth which he put forth. Many apt illustrations he derived from the varied

aspects of nature, which he delighted to observe. He often spoke of the effect of the rough east wind in the early spring on the branches of the fruit trees when laden with bloom, in reference to the after fruitfulness of the trees, as presenting a striking analogy to the dealings of a wise and gracious God in afflicting his children for a season, in order that they might ultimately bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. I well remember Mr. Sears pointing out how almost invariably it was the method of God with His people to allow them to suffer a while in order that they might be made perfect, stablished, strengthened, settled. Of this divine method he himself had ample personal experience.

"Ere I conclude I wish to say a word or two about the Clifton Selection of Hymns. This book was the result of great labour, spread over a very considerable period of time, great pains being taken to present the various hymns in the form in which they were originally written, and especially to see that the doctrine contained in them was such as the editor could endorse. The number in this collec- being one thousand, the range of authorship is very wide. Many of the most touching hymns in the English language are brought together, and the whole forms a good and edifying collection. The preparation of this book was to Mr. Sears a thorough labour of love.

"Our friend had no misgivings as to the divine

authorship of the Bible. He felt that, though heaven and earth should pass away, not one tittle of that word would fail. He had also that best of evidence, he had proved in his own case the power of the two-edged sword. Hence it was that he spoke with the utmost plainness when he reasoned of sin and its consequences, desiring for his hearers that the full measure of their necessities might be so realised by them, that they might be led to cry out of their deep distress, What must we do to be saved?

"No less with regard to the comfortable words of the gospel message to men. Our friend having drank deeply of divine consolation, could confidently speak comfort to mourners for sin, and say that the warfare had been accomplished, that the iniquity had been pardoned. He believed, and therefore he spoke. He himself had tasted that the Lord is gracious, and so he could say, 'O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.'"

MEMOIR OF SEPTIMUS SEARS.

CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE, EARLY LIFE, AND CALL BY GRACE.

SEPTIMUS SEARS, the subject of this memoir, was born at Chatteris in Cambridgeshire, January 5th, 1819. He was the seventh son of Mr. Joseph Sears, a highly respected tradesman of that village, who ended a long life under the roof of his beloved and affectionate son Septimus, and was interred in the vault in front of the chapel at Clifton. Although grace, we know, is not hereditary—for those who receive the Lord Jesus in their heart by faith are "Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 13)—yet since it is both pleasant and encouraging to see how God often hears the prayers of believing parents and confers an honour upon them and their gracious efforts by blessing their seed, even

from generation to generation, we think it will not be out of place to repeat here the narrative which Mr. Sears published in the *Little Gleaner* (October, 1867) on the occasion of his father's death. We hope many readers will not only be interested, but also have their faith strengthened thereby.

"The Lord has called me to pass through the trial of attending the dying bed of an aged and valued father, who died in sweet peace on the 5th of August, 1867, aged 88 years. Some details of his life, conversation, and death I wish to give to my friends, and, as they are somewhat lengthy, I must not indulge in further preface.

"My dear father was born into this world of sin on the 16th of March, 1779.

"His mother was a woman of singular grace, and, though she had had but little education, she was a woman of very superior mind. She was a member of the Church of Christ at Needingworth, under the pastoral care of Thomas Ladson. She has at times travelled the whole of Saturday and Sunday night in order to hear John Berridge at Everton. She was, I believe, the first to open her house for the preaching of the full doctrines of the Gospel, at Chatteris, Cambs. She had regular gatherings in her house for prayer and reading of the Scriptures, and for the benefit of her neighbours she would, in the absence of men, conduct a service herself, giving comments upon the word, reading hymns, and engaging in prayer with much

ability. She died at the age of 84, at Sutton, in the Isle of Ely. Her end was singularly triumphant.

"Brought up by such a mother, he would from childhood know the Holy Scriptures.

"He was a most industrious, loving father of nine children, whom he brought up, by God's blessing, entirely by the fruit of his industry.

"He was for many years thoughtful about his soul. Indeed, he said, from a child he felt there was a divine change which he knew he must experience, or he could never be saved; and this often caused him much pain and anxiety of mind, and kept him a constant hearer of the truth, and for many years very consistent in his conduct. Still he was never so deeply convinced of sin, and made so earnestly to seek Christ, as to separate himself fully from the world, as becomes those who seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, until he was quite advanced in years.

"The first time he heard his son preach he felt exceedingly wounded in his spirit, and said, 'he always knew the way to heaven was very narrow, but he never saw it so narrow as now.' It is to be feared that there was much in the ministry he was accustomed to hear calculated to lull the anxiety of souls about their safety, by building them up upon shallow evidences without positive repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Many times after this he has walked ten miles and back on a Sunday to hear what deepened his wound.

"For about the last fifteen years (up to the year before his death, which he spent with a brother of the writer), he was a constant hearer at Clifton Chapel. He walked for years a gloomy path, feeling he must have something beyond mere knowledge of doctrines and desires to go into eternity with; and that something he was continually sighing after. Indeed, it was very rare to be within sound of his voice when he felt himself alone without hearing him fetching deep sighs of anxiety. His unsaved soul became his great concern.

"He was at times much encouraged under the word, as particularly at that time the sermons were greatly addressed to seeking souls. One day, when he returned from the chapel, he seemed to have nearly, if not quite, an assurance that he should not die until he had by faith seen the Lord's Christ. He said: 'I could see, though I had not reached the cross, I was on the way, and I thought of that in Genesis, "I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren."'

"I believe at this time he bore that mark of the Lord's elect, 'Crying day and night unto the Lord.'

"It was in the beginning of March, 1857, that the Lord fully sent him forth by the blood of the covenant out of the pit wherein is no water. The text on the occasion was, '*We would see Jesus.*' The subject was, '*The saving sight of Jesus.*' When the service was over, as he left the chapel, a

friend said to him, 'Have *you* seen Jesus?' He answered, with tears of gratitude, '*I have*,' and said his heart was too full to talk. He turned away, went to the side of the chapel, out of sight, stood and leaned his venerable head against the wall, and trembled and wept with overwhelming joy, that he, as he said, such an old, such a great, such a vile sinner, had in his old age seen Jesus by precious faith, and lost that burden of guilt he had for so many years sighed and mourned under. Now, brought to the cross of Jesus, all his bonds were broken, his heart overflowed with gratitude and love, and the love of Christ constrained him to make a public profession of his faith in Jesus, by being baptized and coming to the Lord's table. This he did in the following month, a short time after commencing the 79th year of his life. Many are witnesses of his overflowing love, gratitude, and joy, and of his constant attention to all the meetings and services among the Lord's people here. Nothing seemed to delight his soul like meetings of Christians for prayer and searching the Word; and, although it is true old age had somewhat weakened his mind, so that he could not well be tied down to a comment upon the Scripture that might be under consideration at these meetings, and would go off into exuberant expressions of his love and longings after 'that blest world of spirits,' yet his expressions left the feeling on the hearts of those who heard him how much his heart

was filled with love to the Lord Jesus, and to all the dear people of God.

"He showed a singular concern for the salvation of souls, and nothing so much delighted him as hearing new converts say, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul.' He would often, on such occasions, pour out the feelings of his heart in expressions of overflowing love and gratitude.

"On one occasion, when hindered from meeting with us on a Lord's day, being in bed with a cold, he said he had had hours of sweet meditation upon the word "everlasting." He seemed as full of joy as he could hold. He said: 'I am loved with an *everlasting* love, my name is written in an *everlasting* book of life, I am interested in an *everlasting* covenant, and given into the hands of an *everlasting* Surety. I have an *everlasting* righteousness, an *everlasting* atonement, an *everlasting* Saviour, an *everlasting* Intercessor, an *everlasting* Friend, an *everlasting* Prophet, an *everlasting* Priest, an *everlasting* King, an *everlasting* Rock to build upon, *everlasting* Bread to eat, an *everlasting* Comforter. I am in an *everlasting* way to an *everlasting* home, where I shall wear an *everlasting* crown, have an *everlasting* harp of gold, and sing an *everlasting* song of *everlasting* grace;' and many more such everlastings he mentioned as his joyful meditation.

"Very much might be said of the sweet, prayerful, and loving life he lived after the Lord gave

him peace, but all must be passed over until his last few weeks. He was taken ill under the roof of the writer. His illness lasted a little over three weeks. A few days before he was taken ill, it was said to him, with reference to his difficulty of breathing, 'You are not so bad as you were?' His reply was, 'Bad! yes, so bad that I could not be worse; but I believe I shall be forgiven, for *He* has promised it, and He is faithful. I hope soon to see Him as He is, and then I will *crown Him, crown Him, crown Him* for ever.'

"Very many times he spoke of feeling how near he was to 'that blessed place,' and declared his whole trust was in the finished work of Jesus. Free grace and dying love formed the sole anchorage of his hope. 'None but Jesus, none but Jesus,' he would often exclaim, with peculiar emphasis. His love to the people of God at Clifton Chapel was most fervent, and his heart filled to the brim with gratitude to meet them once more at the beginning of July, after an absence of more than a year.

"When he was first taken ill, he said, 'I think I have come here to lay my body down, and enter that happy home.' I said, 'I hope not, I hope you will yet be spared to us.' He answered, with much feeling, "Don't hope about *that*, leave *that* with the Lord. Let His will be done.' Although his intellectual powers had become sadly weakened, yet, as he suffered no pain, and seemed so happy

in his soul, we could not help desiring still to have his life spared. He was, though childish, so child-like, and patient, and loving, that it seemed painful to part with him. His sayings during his three weeks' illness are given from memoranda made at the time, and to read his own words will give a better idea of the true state of his mind than the remarks of another. *His* words were singularly the index of his soul. Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth did indeed speak. Before giving more of his sayings, it will be well to remark that he was nearly always sleeping, and had scarcely any mind left about natural things; which on the one hand made his sayings few, and on the other hand the more striking, as showing the power of the Holy Spirit to act upon the soul when the brain ceases naturally and clearly to help the mind to take in or express ideas. It was once said to him, when he was being lifted, 'You are like a baby.' He shook his head in his own peculiar way, and said, 'If I am but a true baby, a spiritual baby, a babe of Christ—that is what I want to be.'

"Once he said, 'That is sweet;' and when asked 'What is sweet?' he said, 'Jesus is precious to my soul, and that is sweet. He is almighty, gracious, and ever merciful. I feel strengthened in grace. I am still begging for grace to hold me up. Come, Lord, and uphold me with the right hand of Thy power. Hold me up with Thy powerful hand!' When he was receiving attention he would some-

times say, 'I am not worthy of so much kindness. Think what some poor people have to endure, and see what mercies I have. I suffer no pain anywhere; I only feel weary and weak.' He would often say—

"'I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.'

One day he said, with much sweetness, 'Christ is the best Friend; if He loves, He loves to the end;' and then repeated—

"'Jesus, my all, to heaven is gone—
He whom I fix my hopes upon;
His track I see, and I'll pursue
The narrow way till Him I view.

"'The way the holy prophets went,
The path that leads from banishment,
The King's highway of holiness
I'll go, for all His paths are peace.'

At hearing the name of Jesus mentioned, he said, '*Ah, that is the name.*'

"'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.'

'That is the name that I shall sing in glory.'

"He repeated—

"'Salvation, O the joyful sound!
'Tis pleasure to our ears,
A sovereign balm for every wound,
A cordial for our fears.'

And then tried to sing it, but after two notes he

said, 'I cannot sing—I have no breath.' Referring to the closing words of the verse, he said, 'The fears will come, but this salvation rises above them all.'

"He seemed for a few days at one time not quite so happy, and was frequently in prayer. He would say, in the most imploring, childlike tone, 'Do, Lord, come again, and visit my soul! Let me have one sweet taste of Thy love! Do shine upon me!' Once, soon after this, when a friend spoke to him, he said, 'I am just enjoying a sweet comfort. Christ is all and in all. None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good.'

"Once he seemed to think I was gone to preach the Word, and said: 'Lord, it must be Thou, and Thou alone, that canst enable him to speak. May great grace rest upon him, and upon them that hear him! May Christ crucified be praised, and may both speaker and hearers have reason to rejoice together! It is Thou, and Thou alone, that canst work the work of grace in the heart, and then work in us to will and to do of Thy good pleasure.'

"After being placed for the night, he was asked if he were quite comfortable. His reply was: 'No, I am not; for if I were I should be in that blessed place. I shall never be quite comfortable until I am there, and it will not be long.'

"At one time he commenced in prayer to God by the following sweet words: 'O Thou great and

gracious One, who hast fulfilled the law and made it honourable, and hast saved us from sin and vanity,' when his mind and strength failed him.

"He appeared once very deep in thought, and when asked what he was thinking about, he said: 'Not about any worldly concerns, and it would be no use if I were, for I could alter nothing.'

"Once he said, in a tone of singular sweetness, simplicity, and gratitude: 'Lord, I am precious in Thy sight. Christ is my all and in all. I am reconciled by Christ.'

"One morning he said to us: 'I hope the Lord will help you through all your troubles and trials, and keep you with longing desires after Christ, and Him crucified.' To one who drew near to him, he said, 'I wish;' and when asked what he wished, he said, 'I wish I may have a happy, happy race.' He possibly meant, end of his race. 'I shall never tire of one name, the dear Rock. He'll never lose His power till all the ransomed Church of God be saved to sin no more.'

"Once he repeated—

> "'There is a fountain filled with blood,
> Drawn from Immanuel's veins.'

And at the last two lines his tears came, and his utterance was nearly choked with feeling—

> "'And sinners plunged beneath that flood
> Lose all their guilty stains.'

"He said, 'I cannot repeat that without tears.'

He often rejoiced that he, 'an old grey-headed sinner,' as he would call himself, 'should be washed in that precious fountain.' The Sunday after he was taken ill, it was said to him, 'I am going to chapel.' He said: 'I cannot go; they must beg for me; I have begged for them scores of times. When I was away I do not know whether they thought of me; but I always thought of them, and begged for them twice every day, and many times besides.

"Two days before he died he seemed a little better, and as he sat in his easy chair, while his bed was attended to, it was said to him, 'You know Jesus.' He answered quickly, '*He knows me.*' Once, when he was held up in his bed, he made some remark that showed he did not know where he was. It was said to him, 'Where are you?' He answered, with much solemnity: 'On a good foundation, I hope. Christ is my Foundation; there is no other—no, no, there is no other.'

"The Saturday previous to his death, when placed in an easy chair, he said: 'I keep slipping and slipping,' and then said, with great solemnity, 'I shall soon take a long and a last slip, and a *blessed* slip it will be to me; for I shall slip into that blessed place where there is that blessed company of saints and angels.' The day before he died, in helping him, one said, 'We will be very careful in trying to help you.' 'Ah,' he said, 'there is only one Helper, that Almighty One.'

"He said to us in the course of the morning: 'I hope you will not neglect to put your trust in the Lord. He has helped me many and many and many a time, and He will help me quite through. His goodness, His power, His grace, and His kindness, endure for ever and ever.'

"About ten in the morning on which he died, he said, '*I am resting.*' It was said, 'I hope you are resting on Christ.' He answered, 'I can do nothing; I am resting on *His love to me.*' Soon after he said, 'Lord, close mine eyes.' He tried to say many things, but his voice was so indistinct that only the word 'Jesus' could be caught at different times.

"A little past one he turned his eyes upward, and, with the most placid countenance, sank gradually to sleep in the arms of Jesus. There were but three gentle sighs, and his spirit was carried by angels to the paradise above, where he had so longed to be, and where no doubt he is now crowning Jesus in strains of immortal gratitude.

"Dear young readers, there is a solemn reality in the religion of Jesus, that can thus smooth the rough waters of the river of death. Oh, may you be led by the Spirit of God to seek and find that precious Jesus, whose blood cleanseth the conscience, and whose love sweetly sustained the soul of my dear dying father on his dying bed!

"And I would earnestly advise you to value your kind parents while you have them, and so to seek

to walk towards them, that you may not have to follow them to the grave with sobs of regret at the remembrance of the pain your conduct has given to their loving hearts.

"The Lord bless the above account to many souls is the sincere desire of your willing friend,

"THE EDITOR."

From the preceding interesting account we gather some facts concerning the stock whence he came, which may tend to incite esteem for the prominent traits of Christian character visible in Septimus Sears and his godly ancestors. In each case we see how the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ prints its indelible mark upon the heart and life of those who are the partakers thereof.

After this introduction, we shall give, in his own words as much as possible, Mr. Sears' account of his early life and conversion to God. He says:—

"I was, in common with all the rest of Adam's fallen posterity, conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, and lived and walked according to the course of this world until God, who called me by His grace, separated me therefrom. At a very early age (under ten) I went to a Methodist chapel, and heard a minister speak from the following words: 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' The man did so speak of hell and damnation to every one that 'neglected to repent,

pray, and make their peace with God,' that my whole body trembled as if an ague had seized me. I began to shake off this tremor by persuading myself that I might possibly have many years to live, and that therefore it was not worth my while to render my whole life miserable by beginning so early to be religious; for religion appeared to me to be the most gloomy subject that the human mind could be enshrouded with. But my so-called teachers soon again horrified me by making use of some such words as the following: 'Turn you, turn you, why will you die? Thoughtless sinner, why will you rush on heedlessly, upon the very precipice of eternal ruin, when one moment's delay to return may engulph you in endless flames, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"? Turn to-day—to-morrow may be everlastingly too late! You are not too young to die, and, therefore, not too young to prepare for death.' At which I resolved to make no longer delay, but set to work with all my might at mending my ways, reforming my life, changing my heart, working out my own salvation, and making my peace with God, as I vainly called it. To accomplish this task I set about sewing new pieces on an old garment, until I really seemed to myself to have a decent dress, and to be as good as most. Thus, being nothing more than convicted in my own natural conscience, I soon stilled those

inward qualms, and could sin with the greatest impunity, and without the least burden, if I could but afterwards creep into secresy and say my prayers. After this time many very cutting and keen convictions followed me, but they seemed something like April showers—though sharp, soon over—and upon the whole there was not much fear but that I was on the way to heaven; yea, so strong at times were my delusive hopes of joy after death, that if anything went a little contrary to my desire, I would even beg of God to hasten my dying day, when I foolishly expected to have done with all the difficulties of time, and to enter into an eternity of joy and happiness. Thus, though not aware of it, 'Madly I ran the sinful race,' too proud and haughty to seek to Christ alone for my full, free, and eternal salvation; but—

> "'Glory to God, I could not rove
> Beyond the limits of His love;
> Fenced by Jehovah's shalls and wills,
> Firm as the everlasting hills.'

"'The appointed time rolled on apace,' when the hidden determinations of stupendous grace must be developed in the conviction and conversion to God of such a wrath-deserving wretch; for 'thus the eternal counsel ran,' that I should be arrested. I was walking round a stack with a waggon rope in my hand, my thoughts fully occupied about the things of time, and, when just turning the corner of the stack, was unexpectedly stopped,

and the very horrors of hell so entered my soul that I expected every moment to sink into the bottomless pit of irretrievable ruin. Thus—

" ' Plunged in a gulph of deep despair,
At hell's dark door I lay,
Without one cheerful gleam of hope,
Or spark of glimmering day,'

when suddenly my attention was caught from this horrid sight by the sounding through my poor soul of the following words: 'I will throw over you the cords of love, and gently draw you back.' At this a gleam of hope entered my benighted heart, that peradventure the Lord would have mercy upon me and deliver me from going down into the pit. I crept to a gatepost, and there began to cry earnestly for mercy from a deep sense of my need of it, backing up my petitions with the most solemn promises and resolutions that methinks could come out of the mouth of a mortal. O how I promised that if the Lord would not send me to hell I would be better for the future, would guard against and avoid every sin that I had been addicted to, and would if possible, live a holy life; all which promises were in a short time broken, and that passage in Peter came with such an awful force that my poor heart trembled within me, and I reeled to and fro in my feelings and staggered like a drunken man: 'The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the

mire.' No tongue can tell, nor pen describe, with what horror my forfeited promises and broken resolutions before a heart-searching God filled my soul. Indeed it now seemed to me that such a wretch could not possibly escape eternal wrath, but must as surely be lost as ever hell is the dread abode of all those that die in their sins.

"At length, however, I became so hardened and careless as to sin without much remorse; for I used to quiet my conscience, by telling myself that when I came to die, if I had but time to say, 'Lord have mercy upon me!' or, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' I should stand a good chance of being saved; for the word of God says, 'Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,' and the dying thief found mercy at the eleventh hour. With these and other such carnal reasonings and perversions of Scripture I calmed my breast, shook off my fears of hell, and fostered my fleshly hopes of heaven. Thus I found that Arminian doctrines had that tendency upon me that free-willers say the doctrines of grace have upon their recipients, viz., to harden the neck in iniquity.

"I went one Sabbath morning to hear a man expound, when he read the Epistle of Jude, and in the course of his remarks thereupon mentioned that portion of God's truth contained in Rev. vi. 15—17: 'And the kings of the earth,

and the great men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains ; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?' Never can I forget the effect these words had upon me; all hope of ever being saved seemed to be taken away, and I felt certain that I should one day be summoned to the dread tribunal of Jehovah, and in vain should cry to rocks and mountains, 'Fall on me, and hide me from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;' for I must hear the dread sentence pronounced: 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.' Away flew all my legal props, ill-founded hopes, vain expectations, and delusive visions of happiness; and what an awful vision was opened to view! My iniquities, that had long been forgotten, rose up and appeared like a mighty mountain upon me, and I verily thought they would sink me to eternal despair; while the curses of a broken law, and many of the awful threats in God's Word against the reprobate, sounded through my soul, causing terror indescribable ; and the thought of appearing before a holy God distracted me. Thus the law condemned me, sin burdened me, and nothing had I

done that could be pleaded as a reason why sentence of eternal death should not be executed upon me. In this fearful tremor, and with these dreadful feelings, I crept from the meeting house and staggered across a common, and there, out of the anguish of my soul, made what afterwards seemed the daring attempt to call upon the name of the Lord, while, at the same time, something within me told me He would do right if he sent such a sinful wretch to the bottomless pit. Thus, after leaving the meeting house like a poor condemned malefactor, I lay and learnt experimentally what the psalmist means by 'the groaning of the prisoner appointed to die.' I felt appointed to die by the law: 'The soul that sinneth it shall die;' appointed to die by the testimony: 'He that believeth not shall be damned;' (for though I had faith enough to 'believe in God' as my lawgiver and judge, I was entirely unable to 'believe also in Christ' as my law-fulfiller, debt-payer, and curse-bearer;) appointed to die by the decree of Jehovah, that no unclean thing, nothing that defileth, shall enter the gates of the New Jerusalem; appointed to die by my own conscience, for all the accusations that God's law could bring against me my conscience loudly acceded to and acknowledged strictly true, while my fears told me that hell would certainly be my portion. My reasonings were something like this: Hath He said, 'The wicked shall be turned into

hell,' and shall He not do it? Hath He threatened eternal death to the soul that sinneth, and shall He not make it good? 'If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.' Thus in the condemned cell I lay tied and bound hand and foot, so that it was vain to attempt, as I formerly imagined I had power to do, to flee from the wrath to come; indeed, it seemed as if it was wrath already come, for 'the law worketh wrath.' And, alas! I now felt as helpless as guilty, for the iniquity of my heels compassed me about; yea, like Lazarus, I was called forth to the light, bound hand and foot with the grave clothes of my own sinfulness and helplessness, and my face bound about with the napkin of my own blindness and ignorance; while in substance I exclaimed, with Jonah, 'I am cast out of thy sight, yet will I look again toward thy holy temple.' For though thus 'Plunged in a gulph of dark despair,' that secret something within would almost perpetually draw me, with cries for mercy and confessions of guilt, toward Christ Jesus, the holy temple; and yet no poor Mahometan could be much more ignorant of the true Christ and the plan of salvation than I was.

"Now the question of Job was my constant inquiry, 'How should man be just with God?' and such portions of truth as the following would rush in upon my mind: 'Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the

book of the law to do them;' 'The soul that sinneth it shall die.' At which my poor lost and ruined soul would cry: 'Hell is my portion; woe is me, for I am undone, undone for ever.' For I felt fully convinced that I had not continued in *one* thing written in the book of the law to do it; but had broken the law of a holy God, in every precept, in thought, word, or deed. My sins appeared 'more in number than the hairs of my head;' all hopes of ever being saved seemed taken away from me, and it is a mercy the Lord did not allow me to become completely distracted. Surely He, and He only, kept me from utter despair, when, like Cain, I was ready to cry, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear.'

"After being thus driven to my wit's end, helpless, lost, and undone in my own feelings, I embraced every opportunity of hearing all sorts of preachers within my reach, anxiously desirous to know which way it was possible for Jehovah to maintain His truth and be a just God if He saved my guilty soul; for I was still unable to answer the question, 'How shall man be just with God?' and was almost constantly groaning for the Lord to show me how it was possible for a wretch so base to escape the wrath to come. At length, by hearing some of the doctrines of grace preached, and reading the Word of God, I began to get a little further light into the plan of salvation by Christ's substitutionary work, and could faintly

see how God could, consistently with His own perfections, save me from the curse due to violators of the precepts of His holy law. Previously I disputed the power of God to save me, 'If Thou canst do anything.' But now my 'if' respected His willingness to save me, and the cry of my soul was, 'I know He is able to save, but is He *willing to save me?*' It was now really home work with me: a mere assent of the mind to a sound theological creed could not satisfy my heart. Whenever a poor sinner is brought into such a place, it is not enough for him to know that the Father has elected a people, formed a people for Himself, and said: 'They shall show forth My praise;' that the Son hath redeemed that people by His obedience and blood, and represents them and pleads for them in His ceaseless intercession before the throne; and that the Spirit quickens that people, and guides them through this land of deserts and pits to their incorruptible and unfading inheritance, where they sing in ceaseless anthems the undying honours of the triune Jehovah. No, no! a barely speculative knowledge of the letter of these glorious truths will never satisfy a really and feelingly lost and undone sinner, whose mouth has been stopped, and who has become guilty before God; but the very breathing of His soul will be, under the influence of the Spirit of life, of wisdom, and of supplication: O that I had the testimony in my own soul that the Father

has loved me, has elected me, has formed me for Himself, and that I shall show forth His praise, as a sinner saved by His grace. O had I but a divine assurance that the Son of God wrought out for me a justifying righteousness, redeemed me by His blood, and represents me in His intercessory pleading.

"These were the feelings of my soul, though, through great ignorance even of the letter of truth, it is probable that I did not then make use of such language, but my soul was really panting after these things. I needed not to be driven by threats or drawn by exhortations to pray; for almost every time I could get alone my soul was pouring out strong cryings and tears before God, that He would in mercy be pleased to show me that my sins were forgiven. And at times I was blest with some such access at the mercy seat, pouring out of my soul before God, and power in prayer to Him, while my eyes streamed with tears of penitence, that I began to feel a hope rise in my soul that the Lord would one day appear in mercy to me as He did to Jeremiah, and assure me that He had loved me with an everlasting love, and had therefore with lovingkindness drawn me; and this hope was strengthened by such scriptures as these dropping with a little unction into my soul: 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,' 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord

shall be saved,' and 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.' These used to be something like my thoughts when such passages struck my mind: 'Well, I cannot live without coming to Jesus and telling Him all my wants, and confessing all my woes; then, surely, to be true to His own word, He will in no wise cast me out. I cannot help praying, and nothing seems to give me such relief as to feel liberty in calling upon the name of the Lord to have mercy upon and save my guilty soul; then, surely there is some ground to hope, since God has said it, that I shall be saved; and nothing does my soul so ardently pant after, and thirst and long for, as to be clothed in Jesus' righteousness; then surely I shall one day be filled with joy by the Spirit's witness that this blessed righteousness is mine.' I could have appealed to God, and said, 'Thou knowest that if the world were mine I would part with all to feel this dress on my soul, and be able to say, "Christ is mine, and I am his!" for I really felt—

> "'Were I possessor of the earth,
> And called the stars my own,
> Without this righteousness of Christ,
> I were a wretch undone.'

These things gave me encouragement in attempting to call upon God; but still, an answer was what I wanted. I was not content to call myself by the name of Jacob, but desired to subscribe

with my hand unto the Lord, and surname myself by the name of Israel. Had I possessed worlds I could have given them to have felt the substance of Jacob's answer from God in my own soul: 'Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God, and hast prevailed.' Thus a 'who can tell?' kept me from total despair, and there was a resolve in my soul that if I must perish it should be crying for mercy. I felt that, since none but the Lord could help me, on His name I must call; and, since it was mercy I needed, and nothing but free mercy would suit my case, for mercy I must cry as long as breath was left in my body, and my soul was out of 'the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone' (Rev. xxi. 8).

"The set time was now near at hand, when God had determined to fulfil His own word in my soul's experience: 'They shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.' I heard of a man's coming to preach, and felt a great desire to go and hear him; a little hope also sprang up in my soul that perhaps I might hear something that would profit me. I went to hear him when the time came, and felt as if the day was about dawning, and the day star was about appearing; for on the way my soul was led out in an unusual manner. The text was taken from Heb. ix. 4: 'Aaron's rod that budded.' I should be at a loss to give an out-

line of the discourse; but this I remember, that the man spoke much of the buddings of life in a newly-quickened soul, his sorrows, his little hopes, his cries and tears, and so on, until I was filled with astonishment, and was ready to say, 'The man is telling me all that ever I did.' Indeed I wondered how he came to know my feelings, and thought that surely some one must have heard me behind the hedges pouring out my sorrows before God, and told the preacher of it; but, from the fact of his being a stranger, I was greatly puzzled to understand how this could be, as I had never told my feelings to any mortal, and indeed could not have told them. But how my soul seemed raised to hope when the man declared that those who felt these things were living souls! The news seemed too good to be true; and though somewhat encouraged yet I dared not lay hold of the assurance that was held out to such characters.

"I left the place, and passed the night in such a way and with such feelings as I never before had; seeming to have almost hope enough to counterbalance my fears, and yet being afraid of my hope. I could not feel the desired assurance of being a vessel of mercy and having my sins forgiven, and yet it seemed that if the man had told the truth, I must be a child of God; but, while not daring altogether to contradict him, yet I could not believe he had told the truth concerning me. I wanted the testimony of God in my own

soul. My heart went out to God after a feeling assurance that my sins were forgiven, and that I was a vessel of mercy; and before the morning was gone this desire was granted. It had seemed since the evening before, as if I had long lain in a dungeon, and some one had come, unlocked the door, opened it, and allowed me to step toward it, as though he intended to let me out, and then had shut the door upon me again; when my hopes sank, and the disappointment appeared unendurable; and again the door would open, and I should be allowed to put one foot over the threshold, and again be thrust back. But now I felt suddenly to leave the stocks, the chains, and the prison house, to burst from the 'snare of the fowler,' to escape from all the sins, terrors, fears, and dreadful apprehensions that before had bound me and caused me to 'roar like a bear, and mourn sore like a dove.' I am not conscious that any passage of scripture struck my mind at the time; but I never can describe the love, the peace, and the joy that flowed into my soul, the sense of the forgiveness of my sins, and the sweet assurance that I was one of God's elect, and was justified from all things. I was out walking at the time, and never shall forget how my heart, eyes, and tongue teemed with gratitude and wonder. I could, without a doubt, in looking up toward the sun, believe the sun's Creator was my everlasting

portion, my heavenly Father, and my eternal home.

"I scarcely felt the ground, my soul was so completely carried above the earth; and such heavenly expressions flowed like a sweet stream from my heart, and out of my mouth, as would before have seemed impossible for me to make use of. I do hope that that was the time, and that the sacred spot, where I really entered into a little of the blessedness of being a ransomed sinner, an object of Jehovah's choice, part of the purchase of a Saviour's precious blood, and 'an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile,' as seen in the person of Jesus, washed in His blood and clad in His righteousness; even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.'

"All slavish fears of death, judgment and hell had completely fled. 'Perfect love casteth out fear,' and my soul could then with holy rapture have joined with the apostle to sing, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Yes, every foe and every fear seemed completely gone; sin pardoned; its awful consequences endured

by my surety in my stead; the evils of my heart put down; death disarmed of all its terrors; the judgment deprived of all that was before so alarming; and hell for ever shut against me; while my soul felt something of what the apostle meant when he said: 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.'

"And surely I could have sung 'this song unto the Lord, and spoken saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously' over all my foes and fears. 'The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation.'

"Those were truly blessed moments, when the Lord gave 'beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.' While I was leaping, weeping, shouting, and singing for joy, these words came sweetly to my mind and broke out from my lips—

> "'This is the way I long have sought,
> And mourned because I found it not;
> My grief, my burden, long has been
> Because I could not cease from sin.'

My soul was filled with love to the writer of those lines, and to all God's children. I thought, bless the dear man, he had been plagued as I have been plagued; his grief and burden had been like mine; but he, like me, had found 'the good old way,' had lost all his sins, and lived the blessed life that I have just begun to live. My hope was that as I had just begun to live a life of communion with my heavenly Father and my suffering Saviour, by the Spirit, my heart, my ears, my tongue, and all the powers of my soul would be constantly employed in praising and blessing the Lord, and in extolling the name of my God. And as to doubting my election, that appeared impossible; for I thought, surely, though I am one of the most unworthy of sinners, never was a soul on this side heaven favoured with a more blessed manifestation of God's love, and more triumphant joy and assurance. For many days, the love to God and the sweet communion with a suffering Saviour that I was favoured with at times, is past describing. O! the hours that I have spent, with melted heart and streaming eyes, in following the dear Redeemer from His humble birth, through His wonder-working life, to His groans in the garden and His ignominious death, with the witness in my own soul that He became incarnate, obeyed, and suffered in my stead! At length, however, this suggestion struck me, that my happiness never

could be of the right kind, because it was attended with so much sorrow and grief, and always caused me to shed such floods of tears. After having been for some time tried, because in my happiest moments I shed tears the most freely, I heard two old men talking together of their experience; and the one said to the other, "O! how I love when I can shed them (*sic*) sweet tears!" I was all attention while the other spoke of his tears of love and grief, and it gave me great encouragement to think that others, who were God's children, loved to feel what I loved to feel. This completely broke the spell of that temptation, and since then I have numbers of times felt to long for the broken heart, the contrite spirit, and the streaming eyes that I then was often blest with while viewing the dear Redeemer suffering under the weight of my cruel sins, and beholding the blood-stained Captain of my salvation hanging a spectacle of ignominy, and bearing my sins in His own body on the rugged wood.

"The change that had now taken place in me I never can describe, for everything about me wore a new face, and all creation seemed to be singing in concert its Maker's well-deserved praises. Well might the apostle say: 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new.' 'And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new.' So I had new feelings; for instead

of feeling fast 'bound in affliction and iron,' with a heart full of enmity, rebellion, lust, and blasphemy, with 'no soundness in my flesh, because of God's anger, nor any rest in my bones because of my sin,' I was walking at perfect liberty, full of love, peace, and joy, and triumphing in the truth that there could be 'no condemnation for me' since my sins were all forgiven. I saw things in a new light; for even creation appeared what it had never appeared to me before, and I looked up to God with feelings and contemplations altogether new; for now, instead of looking up to Him as my inexorable Judge, I looked up to Him as my ever living, loving, and compassionate Father.

"O! how sweet to have the threefold witness in ourselves, 'the spirit, and the water, and the blood;' that we are founded on the rock of ages; cleansed in the Saviour's fountain; justified by the Redeemer's doings; surrounded with the wall of fire; and that we shall have boldness in the day of judgment. The spirit of adoption sent forth into the soul, bears witness to our adoption, and cries, Abba, Father. The water of the river of unchanging love, 'the streams whereof make glad the city of God,' flows sweetly into the heart, bearing down and washing out every fear, and witnessing that God hath 'loved us with an everlasting love, and therefore with lovingkindness hath drawn us.' The blood that gushed from the Redeemer's heart is sprinkled upon the conscience,

and speaks pardon, peace, and reconciliation. We are 'come unto mount Sion,' where the Lord commandeth the blessing, and 'unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all' with holy boldness, who *was* to us as a consuming fire and whom we dreaded to approach; and, with felt union, 'to the spirits of just men made perfect, and,' O blessed company! 'to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel.' Oh that this three-fold witness may be more prized, sought after, and enjoyed; and that, giving all diligence, we may more abundantly 'add unto our faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity; for if these things be in us and abound, they make us that we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' "

CHAPTER II.

AFFLICTIONS AND SPIRITUAL EXERCISES.

MR. SEARS, as many who will read this memoir well know, was a man of weakly constitution and delicate health, which he seemed to inherit from his birth; and though during the latter years of his life he was greatly favoured with a measure of strength and elasticity of frame far beyond what could at one time have been anticipated, still the distressing afflictions he for some years endured left their mark upon his weak frame in the form of valvular affection of the heart, which at times caused him great inconvenience and suffering, and at last was the means of terminating his valuable and useful life. Many years ago he gave an account of some of those distressing attacks of bodily suffering he had endured, also of the wonderful recovery therefrom, and the exercises of soul he passed through during that period; from which record we select the following passages, in order not only to give the facts, but also to show how, with subsequent exercises and divine instruction, the work of grace was carried

on and deepened in his soul, so as to qualify him for the important position he filled for a goodly number of years in the Church of Christ. He says:—

"I find that Hezekiah, when he had been sick and had recovered from his affliction, was inspired to write of the same, and to record to the Lord's honour what He had done for him in it, and how He had brought him through it. And the Lord having been graciously pleased to lead me through, and sometimes support me in, and in a great measure, and in a very miraculous manner, to recover me from great bodily affliction and pain, I have felt a desire to give some outlines of my afflictions, and also to record some of God's dealings with my soul in them, and to testify of His goodness in graciously removing them, in order that His great and holy name may by such record be glorified.

"I have been told that in infancy and childhood, farther back than my memory can carry me, I was many times considered to be nigh unto death, and that from my birth I was the subject of great weakness and affliction, and also of God's kind care and marvellous preservation. In after days that same divine hand still protected me in a wonderful manner from many dangers which seemed to threaten my life. Once, when I was very young, a lad older than myself struck me on the head with a hoe, and the blow was dealt with such force that

it laid open my scalp. At another time I was about to sink the third time when bathing in a piece of water beyond my depth, but was drawn out by a boy who was near at hand, and restored by the warmth of the sun. Another remarkable event occurred as follows: When quite a lad I, with a number of boys, was climbing about a building, and as the rest of them all at once hastened down to play at cricket, and left me on the building alone, in my haste to follow them I was attempting to drop from one beam to another when a nail caught my clothes, and I hung there for some time suspended, having lost both foot and hand hold. At length the nail drew out, and I fell with my loins across a brick wall. I was taken up very much hurt (it has often appeared to me a wonder that my back was not broken: this, however, was not the will of the supreme disposer of all events), and in the course of a little time I nearly recovered. Although this caused great weakness in my loins, I seemed to have pretty well got over it until I caught a cold, which brought back the pain in my loins and made my legs seem to be of such a weight that I could scarcely drag them after me. By applying strengthening plasters I began to recover again until a fresh cold brought back the same pain and weakness. The use of the same simple means, however, restored me again and again; but just after having, as I hope, enjoyed gospel

liberty I was visited with a disease of the liver; after which my back became much worse, and the pain increased to such a degree that I was very much wasted and weakened thereby, and the various means resorted to to alleviate my pain and restore my strength all proved abortive. But the enjoyment I was blessed with during that summer I never can tell. I was just able to walk about half a mile by leaning on a stick, although it took me a long time to do so, as my breathing was very difficult, and I was very much bent, owing to the injury done to my backbone. But as I have walked about, trembling through weakness of body, coughing and struggling to get my breath, my soul has had such melting sights of a suffering Saviour, and has been so fired with holy longings to be before the throne, free through His blood from every stain of sin, and clad in His spotless righteousness, that it has appeared more than my frail body could bear up under. I well remember a lonely walk where I have been blessed with such overpowering views by faith of the majesty of the Lord, have so triumphed in His love, so adored His person, and so abhorred myself before Him, that time after time I have sunk down with the exhaustion of my frame, under the weight of the love of Christ in my soul. Many portions of His word were during that summer made 'sweeter than honey to my mouth;' yea, many times has He made me to 'esteem the words of His mouth

more than my necessary food.' O the divine glory and the immortal worth that I have beheld in the Lamb of God! and how my soul could enter into this portion of His word: 'As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons; I sat down under his shadow with great delight and his fruit was sweet to my taste; he brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.' 'His mouth is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely; this is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.' 'A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me, he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts; his left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.' I could truly say: 'My cup runneth over; surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' 'For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' These are a few amongst many scriptures which were indeed to me 'words fitly spoken, like apples of gold in pictures of silver.'

"What blessed living it was! I scarcely passed a day all that summer but some precious portion of His word was found by me, and I was enabled to eat it, and to esteem it more precious than gold,

yea, than much fine gold. I appeared to be growing weaker in the body and stronger in soul; so that I could really say with the apostle, 'Though my outward man perish, yet my inward man is renewed day by day.' Yea, I have many times, after a fit of coughing and bad breathing, as soon as I could speak, been forced to burst out with the poet—

"'Millions of years my wondering eyes
Shall o'er thy beauties rove;
And endless ages I'll adore
The glories of thy love.

'Haste, my beloved, fetch my soul
Up to thy bright abode
Fly! for my spirit longs to see
My Saviour and my God.'

"Surely no poor soul, thought I, ever was thus favoured with almost constant nearness at God's throne, and communion and fellowship with the Lamb of God in his sufferings! O the many, many solemn walks in Gethsemane that my soul was then favoured with; the sweet sin-subduing, guilt-removing, soul-enlarging, and heart-melting sights of a suffering Saviour that I enjoyed! Many times has the dear Comforter taken me as it were sensibly by the hand and led me up to the solemn altar of covenant love, to witness by faith the covenant engagement of the eternal Trinity in my behalf, and has blest me with the spirit of adoption

in my soul, the sprinklings of atoning blood on my conscience, and the love of the blessed Three in One shed abroad in my heart. Doubts and fears have been removed, and I have believed and felt, that though in myself such a worthless, filthy, guilty, helpless, ignorant worm, yet I am an object of Jehovah's eternal love; one whom the Father chose to eternal life, gave to Christ, blest with all spiritual blessings in Him, and predestined to the adoption of sons, and to salvation and eternal life through and in the Lamb; one whom the Son eternally engaged to redeem with His blood and to clothe with His righteousness; and one whom the Holy Ghost had eternally determined to make alive by His power, and bring down lost, helpless, and wounded, into the dust at Immanuel's feet, to be saved and healed by Him who is 'anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek, and to bind up the broken hearted.' What a solemn, glorious, humbling wonder of wonders that the eternal Jehovah, who is in Himself infinitely glorious, happy and complete, should ever have seen fit to love, choose, and redeem sinners; should have resolved to glorify Himself in the eternal glorification of rebels, and that in such a way that all His attributes should shine forth in harmony; that the holy I Am, who is Himself perfection, should take a company of leprous souls, purify them to Himself, adorn them for His bride, and even rejoice over them with joy and singing!

"It is indeed an unspeakable wonder, that ever it should have pleased the eternal Jehovah thus to deal with any of the fallen race of Adam, who have no more inherent claim upon Him for these favours than other men, or even fallen angels. But the wonder increases in my apprehension when a sweet assurance is dropped into my own soul that I am one among the happy number, and the dear Comforter draws me to sit at the foot of the cross, beholding the gasping, dying sufferer, listening to His agonizing groans, and then His dying cry, 'It is finished!' while His love melts my heart, and His Father and mine smiles with complacency on me, calls me His son, and tells me I am 'complete in Him.' 'Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth, break forth into singing, ye mountains—O forest, and every tree therein, for the Lord hath redeemed' even such a vile sinner as me, and glorified Himself in my eternal salvation.

"O precious spot! O Christ-endearing, sin-subduing, self-abasing spot!

> "'Here I'd sit for ever viewing
> Mercy's streams in streams of blood;
> Precious drops my soul bedewing
> Plead and claim my peace with God.'

"Thus I continued in the blessed enjoyment of the peace of God all the summer, with scarcely any intermission or interruption, either from without or

within, until the beginning of November, when I was suddenly taken so much worse in body, that in a very little time I was unable to stir a limb. The doctor was sent for, and he at first said he should like to examine my back; but to move me was like killing me. Then he said it did not matter, they had better let me lie still, as it was not likely that I should ever be moved much more alive. Thus left beyond the reach of human aid, and supposed to be just on the brink of the river, I felt at first unmoved, but at length my heart appeared to grow hard and still harder, till it became like a piece of the nether millstone; all my confidence left me, my hope was ready to expire, the cold hand of death seemed to steal over me, pain the most excruciating racked my poor body, and darkness the most dreadful surrounded my soul. Two days rolled away, and I was still in the body; it was therefore thought advisable to move me upstairs, and I remained in this state generally, suffering much both in body and mind during the whole winter. My limbs were swollen to a prodigious size with rheumatism, and I could not move them for the greater part of the time; while the disease was so bad in my chest that I scarcely ever could sleep above twenty minutes at a time, and used to wake in violent pain. For the most part my soul was so filled with fear and dread, and so hopeless, that though racked with pain in life I could not bear even

the mention of dying. I never shall forget one occasion, when, in this desponding state, I was so far gone that I felt my eyes set as if in death, could not speak a word, and seemed to cease breathing for some minutes. My feelings cannot be described; and here I found that a sound creed in my head could give me no comfort without the power of truth in my heart. Well do I remember one Saturday night and one Sunday at that time. That 'night and day' I was 'in the deep' indeed, in a place 'where two seas meet'; a sea of affliction and pain distressing my body, and a sea of trouble tormenting my soul; 'deep called unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts; all his waves and his billows appeared to go over me.' I was taken first after dinner time on the Saturday with a violent hiccough, which continued for about half an hour. In the evening it came on again with such force, that though I could not stir a limb and was dreadfully sore and swollen, I was obliged to be set upright in an easy chair and held in it, or I should have fallen. At last my neck became apparently disjointed, so that I was not able to hold up my head. This hiccough continued until Sunday evening about six o'clock, the doctor and all about me thinking it was the immediate forerunner of death. After it had passed off I was laid down in bed, when (though in great pain, and almost past speaking through weakness and exhaustion) I felt, as to my

body, as if just taken out of a fire and laid on a bed of roses. Still the 'horror of great darkness' surrounded my soul. Isaiah's words were frequently on my lips: 'My leanness! my leanness! woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously, yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously.' After this I appeared to be mending a little, and some hope was entertained of my recovery; but one day, as my father and mother were moving me out of one room into another, I suddenly lost my little remaining strength, turned black in the face, and appeared choking. While my father held me up, my mother, with great presence of mind, ran and fetched a teapot containing warm water, and put the spout to my mouth, so that I inhaled the steam, which dissolved the phlegm in my throat, and enabled me to breathe. Surely the poet was right, when he said—

> "'Plagues and deaths around me fly,
> Till he bids I cannot die;
> Not a single shaft can hit
> Till the God of love sees fit.'

"After this I appeared to recover a little; but, at the end of April, what were taken to be symptoms of a rapid consumption appeared. Now, all hope of recovery seemed to be dashed again; and, as I felt to have no hope beyond the grave, nothing but despair stared me in the face. During the month

of May, however, I was so far restored as to be able to walk a few yards with two crutches; and as I desired it, and the doctor so advised, I went to Addenbroke's Hospital, Cambridge. "At this time I was obliged, when not in bed, constantly to bear up the whole weight of my head with my hand. But whilst I was there the doctors had an instrument constructed to hold up my head, which was to me an invaluable help.

"During my stay in this place I had some most solemn searchings of heart, and was sometimes driven to my wit's end; but often felt what I did not feel during that wretched winter, a spirit of earnestness in pleading with the Lord, and begging of Him to appear and say unto my soul, 'I am thy salvation.' But though I was almost constantly groaning and begging for the Lord to appear, yet no answer came; and what is worse, after the most earnest crying, begging, and groaning, I have been left to such a spirit of lightness and carelessness that afterwards my heart has been filled with pain to think that I should one hour be the subject of the most solemn searchings of heart before God, and the next feel as frothy as the bubble that rides upon a wave, or, as Berridge complains, be—

> "'Sometimes grave at Jesus' school,
> Sometimes light and play the fool.'

"At length, after I had often cried and forgotten my cry, often cried out of violence and received

no answer, this state of suspense, suspicion, and doubt became so painful that it could be borne no longer; I felt as if I must have an answer to my earnest cries, must know whether I was one of God's children or not, or else die. Then the case of the poor woman who was bowed together with a spirit of infirmity, occurred to my mind with some power; and what was said of her, that 'she could in no wise lift up herself,' seemed so exactly to represent my condition that I felt a little breaking down, a glimmer of hope, a strong desire, and an earnest cry that the Lord would *unbind me.* Soon after these words dropped into my soul, melted my heart, and loosed my bonds: 'Thou art loosed from thine infirmity;' and immediately (O matchless kindness! O the almighty power of his voice!) 'I was made straight, and glorified God.' Ah! from my soul I could then glorify Him for all He had done for me, to me, with me, and in me; and abhorred myself and repented in dust and ashes for my unbelieving and rebellious thoughts, words, and ways. When He speaks peace, confusion departs; when He gives light, darkness flees before it; when He says, 'Thou art loosed' the bonds snap, the new cords, the green withs, and the fetters of iron become as burnt tow, break to shreds, and drop off; when He says, 'Fear not,' every fear flies; when He, the Sun of righteousness, ariseth, Satan and the dreadful lusts of the flesh retire into their lurking places;

and when He says to the prisoner, 'Go forth,' and to him who is in darkness, 'Show thyself,' he goes forth to feed in the ways, and finds 'his pastures in all high places.'

"After this visit from the Lord I left the hospital, and my health became much better, so that I could walk forty or fifty yards with my crutches. I was now at times blest with meltings of soul before God in secret, and sometimes with much enjoyment in reading God's word: but it appeared afterwards that the Lord had favoured me with this to fit me for further trials, for when I reached home, and was walking into the house, I was struck with paralysis. There was first a sort of numbness between my shoulders, and then a trickling pain from the same proceeded to the right shoulder blade, thence down the arm, side, and leg, leaving my right side nearly useless. In a little time it became quite so, so that after this I was obliged for about two years to have my right leg slung in a strap, and go on one leg, with two crutches, and only one hand to move them both. Blessed be God, I was for the most part mercifully preserved from murmuring or repining; but when my health seemed to be in some measure recovered from the effects of this paralytic attack, so that I was able (though not to stand alone at all) to eat my food tolerably well, to attend a place of worship, and to ride out, I became, by getting into company, and once particularly into worldly com-

pany, very much overcome by a spirit of levity. I have had to suffer much for these things; but God knows I have needed all the severe trials and afflictions I have passed through, to bring down that cursed spirit that I have been so much tormented with; and He knows that I would rather be visited with sickness, than left to my natural levity.

"But I must now give you an account of an affliction which befel me in February and March, 1839, and some of my exercises in it, and when coming out of it. This was an attack of rheumatism, to which I am very subject, and which, I think, took the character of rheumatic fever. It was not long after I was seized with the attack before it had extended over my whole frame, so that I had no power to move my limbs, but was obliged to be moved about and fed like a babe. The disease was so near a vital part, that the pericardium or heart-purse (according to a surgeon) was swollen with it, which caused me the most dreadful pain when moved, as the heart had scarcely room for its regular vibrations; and I had to be propped up for a long time together, so as to rather lean forward than not. It seemed to me that if a person had only come and lowered me, and left me lying straight on my back, I must have died; and for a long time, upon being laid down, the palpitation and pain about the heart was excruciating, so that for some days

scarcely any hope whatever was entertained of my recovery, and I became sometimes too weak to answer when spoken to. While thus ill I felt some firm support of mind, and some solemn sweet assurance that I might justly sing—

"'On the rock of ages founded,
What can shake my sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
I may smile at all my foes.'

But when I began a little to recover, O the dreadful hardness I felt, and the awfully wicked thoughts that ran through my mind! I cannot and dare not attempt to describe them. One day, being much better in my health, I was helped out of bed and left alone with the Bible before me, when I looked at it, and for a long time could not tell whether to open it or not. At length, groaning to the Lord to let me find something that would meet my case, I opened it on the twentieth chapter of John, and commenced reading as follows: 'The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.' And now what a blaze of light appeared to shine upon the scripture! I saw that Mary's case was exactly descriptive of mine; Jesus was absent from her, and it was His absence that had caused *me* so much grief. And bless His name, the Lord Jesus did so break and melt my heart, did so lift upon me the light of His countenance, that it appeared

to cure both body and soul at once. O, He is a good physician; Gilead's balm doth cure the heart of all its sadness as soon as applied, and make it spiritually merry; and though a broken spirit drieth the bones, yet this merry heart does indeed do good like a medicine. I turned back to the seventeenth of John, and read from the beginning of that chapter to the end of the gospel. And methinks I never can forget reading those chapters. I read and rejoiced, read and praised, read and wept, read and wondered, loved and admired, till I was completely lost; and one thing that caused me afterwards to admire the Lord's goodness, was that while the heavenly visit lasted no one was allowed to come and interrupt me, which was a long time, much longer than ever I had been left before during my illness.

"After this sweet visit from my precious Friend I was blest for some time with much and frequent communion with the 'chiefest among ten thousand,' and soon so far recovered from my illness as to regain the use of my left arm and leg, and to be able again to ride out, and to walk a little way with the assistance of two crutches. The same year, in June, the Lord opened my mouth in His name for the first time, at Dodington, when I spoke (sitting) from the following two texts, with some degree of liberty: 'I am sent to thee with heavy tidings;' 'Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all

people.' I told the people that, from the internal testimony of the Spirit of God, I could adopt, in truth, the words, 'I am sent with tidings;' but wished them to understand that I did not profess to be sent constantly to preach. I felt assured, and could say so without fear in the presence of a heart-searching God, that I was sent there that evening as a tidings bearer for the King Eternal; but what made me believe so I may (God willing) relate at some future time.*

"After this, in July, I went to Oldhurst to pay a visit, and was invited to speak at Woodhurst, which I refused to do, assuring the friends I was determined not to run before being sent; but on the Sabbath morning the Lord made it so clear to me that He had given me a commission and would impart to me all needed tuition, that I dared not do otherwise than go. And since then I have been kept on speaking in the name of the Lord, who showed me plainly that he had commissioned me to preach the everlasting gospel of the grace of God.

"After having commenced preaching, I was very weak in body, and having one night walked only about fifty or sixty yards, was so exhausted that it was with the greatest difficulty I reached the door of the house where I was staying, and then was obliged to sit down in the porch. When I

* We have not been able to ascertain if Mr. Sears ever did publish the promised particulars of his call to the ministry.

attempted to move again, being quite unable to get upon my crutches, I made an effort to crawl into the house, but had not gone more than two yards in the room before I fainted away. I only name this to show how the Lord could and did strengthen me in the work to which He had appointed me, and to record his goodness in raising me up, in His own good time, from this state of weakness; for when thus weak, I was enabled to preach three times on a Sunday, a full hour, upon an average, each time. I certainly suffered a great deal at times, after my day's work, but was, upon the whole, a wonder to myself, and a wonder to many. But, blessed be God, I hope I can say, I have found Him my strong refuge.

"My strength increased gradually, until January 26th, 1841, and then the use of my arm and leg was restored to me in a very sudden and remarkable manner.

"The state my arm and leg were in, was this:—My arm appeared to be loosened at every joint, insomuch that when it was lifted, it would drop down again in such a lifeless manner as to pain my side; and as to the leg, the ligaments at the knee were so contracted that I could not set my heel to the ground when standing upright. But on the day named above, I sat for a very long time in one position; and when I rose, not only found that my heel was flat on the ground, and that I could almost walk alone, but that I could also lift my hand,

which so surprised me that I did not know what it all could mean.

"At length this thought struck me: This is the Lord's doing, and He is worthy of all the praise. Immediately my heart was full of gratitude to God for what he had done; I therefore fastened the doors, and went upstairs, feeling as if I could have spent all the rest of my days in blessing and praising the name of the Lord. But when I got upstairs all my grateful feelings left me, and I could no more praise the Lord for what He had done than if nothing had occurred; indeed, gratitude for mercies received at God's hand is as much the gift of God as the mercies themselves. But how ashamed I felt to think how good, how unspeakably good, the Lord had been to me, a poor unworthy creature, and that then I could not praise Him for it!

"From that time my strength gradually increased, until I received the hurt which I shall presently speak of. Since then I have at times much admired the wisdom of Him who hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and whose footsteps are not known; for He has made the loss of blood and course of medicine after that hurt a means of very much renovating and improving my health; and I am now able to walk about two miles with a stick, and am at this time writing with the hand that for years I could not use. How much I have to praise Him for! But, alas! how

seldom can I praise Him with a grateful heart! Yet, blessed be the Lord my strength, He does now and then fill my heart with gratitude, and help me to adopt the language of the Psalmist: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.' And surely there have been moments when I have felt that the whole of the first ten verses of the 34th Psalm belong to me; especially this precious language, which I cannot forbear quoting at length: 'My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together; I sought the Lord, and he heard me.' 'This poor man cried and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.' 'O taste, and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.'

"I will now give some account of the hurt before spoken of. On Tuesday, May 11th, I went to Warboys, where, in passing through a doorway

which had a piece of wood nailed across it, my head came in violent contact with the wood, and some of the bones in my head and neck were greatly injured thereby. I did not at first apprehend that I was much hurt, as I walked about for some time afterward, although I felt something like an inward bleeding in my neck; but after a while it became very stiff. I reached home in the evening, and the next morning my neck was worse, so that I was unable to move for some time, and suffered great pain through the whole of the day; but the following day I found myself very much worse. I then used every simple remedy likely to remove the pain, but all appeared ineffectual, and I sometimes felt afraid of losing my reason; but, through the Lord's goodness, my health is now gradually improving, my strength increasing, and I still retain the use of my arms, which I was fearful of losing. 'O how great is His goodness!'

"Having given some little account of the hurt, and the goodness of a covenant God in restoring me, I will mention some of the exercises of my mind under it.

"The morning before (what we term) the accident, in attempting to call upon God's holy name, I had unusual nearness of access to and freedom at the throne of the King of Kings; indeed I felt that the Lord did inspire and then listen to my confessions of sinfulness, expressions of thankfulness,

and petitions for fresh displays of his kindness. I do hope I could, without reserve, say, 'Thy will be done;' but little did I think what was at hand; and the day after the hurt, this portion of God's truth was indeed sweet to my mind: 'To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.' I felt fully assured that this affliction did not spring out of the dust, nor occur by chance, but that it was sent according to God's wise determination and for some wise end; and that it was one among the all things that 'work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.' I was blest with a feeling of resignation to the will of Him of whom the poet justly says—

> " 'Too wise to be mistaken He,
> Too good to be unkind.'

"When I was laid upon my bed in extreme anguish, and in a very precarious state, this was something of my feeling before God: I could say, 'Lord, thou dost know all things; thou dost know that there never was a wretch on earth who more deserved thy wrath than I do; I have, therefore, no hope of ever being saved, except by free unmerited grace, through the precious blood of Jesus.' Yes, I felt as if I could certainly lift my hand at His bar, if He sentenced me to death, and declare Him 'a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right;' but at the same time I could not help

pleading before Him the Saviour's atoning blood and justifying righteousness, and crying with a poet—

> " 'I cannot hope but in thy blood,
> Remember me, O Lord, for good.'

And I trust I was truly blest in mental prayer, to draw nigh with a true heart, and with some assurance of faith, so as to throw my all into His hand and desire Him to deal with me as it seemed Him good, and was favoured in some sweet measure to lose my will in His will, believing that 'what he appoints is best.' But on the Thursday afternoon, after I had leeches applied to my neck, I felt very low indeed in body, and very sinking in my natural spirits, and thought it quite likely that this affliction would be unto death. Just as I felt my natural strength and spirits so gone that I could scarcely speak, these words seemed to flow into my soul like a refreshing stream: 'The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.' And truly the Holy Ghost, by Solomon, has brought forward a fit figure to illustrate my feelings, when he says: 'As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.' Indeed, I was not merely delighted with and living upon the letter of the words, but felt the things contained in them verified in my soul's experience, namely, that the everlasting arms were underneath me. This being the case, I could not do less than exclaim—

" 'How can I sink with such a prop
As my eternal God?'

O how my soul did wonder that the high and lofty One should have such infinite respect to a worm, as to lay sensibly beneath me His everlasting arms of love and mercy! I felt assured, since His arms of love were beneath me, that He would certainly be my guide unto death, and my portion for ever; all my sorrow was over my aggravated sins, that cost the dear Lamb so much agony. O, bless His name, when all His church have been employed millions upon millions of ages in singing His praise, it will be, compared with His infinite worth, but as the small drop of the bucket to the fathomless ocean, or as the dust of the balance to all earth's massive mountains. It is at times a sweet thought to my soul that I shall never be weary of gazing on His person, adoring His grace, crowning His brow, and singing of His goodness. O how sweet were these words of Watts, while I lay on my bed—

" 'Millions of years my wondering eyes
Shall o'er his beauties rove,
And endless ages I'll adore
The glories of his love.'

" But to pass on. All day on Friday I was blest with the sweetest composure, felt to have no will of my own, and notwithstanding my pain could not help blessing the Lord, that He had led me in just the path He had. I would not have had

another path if I might, for I realised what I could not have done in like measure without coming here: that when He gives quietness nothing can cause trouble; that in His presence is fulness of joy; that the blessing of the Lord maketh rich in every state when enjoyed, and that He then addeth no sorrow with it. I also found that when the Sun of Righteousness ariseth all the wild beasts of the forest must gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens, for not one faint murmur was allowed to rise, nor one rebellious feeling to stir in my breast.

"On the Saturday, the first part of the twelfth of Hebrews was in some measure fulfilled in my soul's experience, especially this verse: 'Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.' My soul was favoured to travel after Him in all His overwhelming privations and sufferings. I had such a view of Gethsemane that I never can forget. It was as if I saw the dear Man of Sorrows, 'whose visage was so marred more than any man, and his form than the sons of men,' in His bloody sweat, groaning as if His heart were rending, and He would sink into the earth under the weight of the sins of such a transgressor as I. Whatever pains might rack my body, while my soul was gazing on His emaciated person, and listening to His unequalled groans, it was impossible for me to complain; yea, I was constrained to cry—

"'His way was much rougher and darker than mine.
Did Christ my Lord suffer, and shall I repine?'

I felt some little of what Huntington felt, when he covered his head with his apron at the sight of 'him that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah'; for I could not forbear hiding my face, I was so lost in wonder that ever He should set His love on such a wretch as myself. One might well say—

"'Thy mercy is more than a match for my heart.'

To think He should die in my room and be punished in my stead was truly wonderful. Well might the prophet say, 'his name shall be called Wonderful.' And is it not truly wonderful that He is the mighty God and the real man in one glorious person? Had He not been man as well as God, He never could have suffered, since 'God is a spirit,' not subject to pains or passions; also since man owed the debt, in the nature of man it must be paid. Had He not been God as well as man His sufferings and death would not have satisfied infinite justice; He could not have endured the infinite wrath of the Eternal, without sinking to eternal misery; and His blood and obedience would not have been of infinite worth to pay His people's infinite debts, to wash away their stains, to magnify the law that they had broken, and to bring in for them an everlasting and justifying righteousness. But being Immanuel, God

and man, the Mediator, the Daysman, He can lay His hand upon the offended and offender, and bring the debtor honourably nigh to the Creator, to enjoy His smiles as a God and Father throughout eternity. Thus all the people of God's choice are made lawfully and justly nigh by the blood of Him 'who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,' and are clothed in His righteousness. As God He is wonderful in His condescension, in deigning to take upon Him the nature of His people and become

"'Dressed in such feeble flesh as they.'

For 'being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.'

"He is wonderful in His love to His people, for His is a love that many waters, even all the fearful floods of His Father's vengeance, the awful curses of a broken law, the rage of devils, and the cruelty of men, could not quench.

"His was, indeed, a wonderful dying speech, 'It is finished.' All the sins of all His people were obliterated by His own heart's blood; all the burning billows of vengeance due to their sins had rolled in dreadful fury over Him; all the curses of

a broken law that they deserved had fallen upon His dear head; all the awful stripes of wrath His people earned had been inflicted on the dying sufferer: all His guilty people's debts were cancelled; yea, He had finished their trangressions, made an end of their sins, and brought in for them an everlasting righteousness; so that this His dying cry was no unmeaning sentence. No; it was a sentence at which hell's dark and gloomy cavern shook to the centre, the old serpent's subtle head was bruised, and his plots defeated; it was a sentence at which rocks parted, graves opened, sleeping saints arose, the ancient veil was rent, while Justice sheathed her quenched sword, and smilingly exclaimed: 'I am satisfied.' The holy Father now looks on His wounds, His blood-stained person, and His finished righteousness, and says of the guilty Hephzibah, 'I am pacified towards her;' while the holy law, whose precepts she has so awfully violated, and whose curse she has so richly earned, declares, 'I have no further claim upon her, for Christ, her husband, has obeyed the precept in her room, and endured the curse in her stead: thus while she is eternally acquitted I am magnified and made honourable.' Yes, when this wonderful sentence, 'It is finished,' fell from His majestic lips, then was brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other; truth shall spring out of the

earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.'

"When favoured on that downy bed with a solid and heart-melting assurance that I was interested in this wondrous cry, 'It is finished,' and blest with some sorrowing yet joyous sights of the blood-stained Captain of my salvation hanging lifeless on the rugged wood that I might never come into condemnation, I could with sweet feeling sing—

"'My faith, Lord, lays her hand,
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin:

'My soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didst bear
When hanging on th' accursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there.'

"He was wonderful in power at His resurrection; wonderful in glory at His ascension; and is wonderful in prevalence in His intercession. But what my soul was particularly ravished with at the time of my affliction was His wonderful suitability to save, cleanse, justify, beautify, supply and glorify His dear spouse. Yes, He is indeed just such a Saviour as suits the case of His lost and ruined people; and this every one of God's elect shall be brought so to feel, that they may sing—

"'Mighty to save—he saves from hell;
A mighty Saviour suits me well.'

"O what a wonderful adaptation did my soul find in Him to my case! I a filthy sinner, He a cleansing fountain; I a guilty wretch, He a pardoning God; I a sinful worm, He a sin-bearing surety; I a vile law-breaker, He a glorious law-fulfiller; I afar off, He the only way by which I could be brought nigh; I a refugeless sinner, He a refuge from the storm; I a helpless infant, He the mighty God; I an empty earthen vessel, He inexhaustible fulness; I a hungry soul, He the richest food; I a thirsty sinner, He a springing well; I a poor, poor sinner, He riches itself; I a hopeless sinner, He the hope of Israel; I an unwise, unwary, and feeble traveller in a dangerous path, He a wise almighty friend to lead and guide; a valiant conqueror and warlike captain, who has engaged to take sword and buckler, and stand up for my help, and at last bring me off more than conqueror to wear unfading laurels, bear the victor's palm, and ascribe to Him the kingdom, power, and glory. In a word, I am in myself everything that is dreadfully bad, and He is to me everything that is blessedly good, gloriously holy, and spotlessly pure. Surely, poor sinner, if thou hast felt a little of His wonderful suitablity, thou canst not do otherwise than call His name 'Wonderful;' and thou and I will—

> "'Join all the glorious names
> Of wisdom, love, and power,
> That mortal ever knew,
> That angels ever bore;'

and then say—

> " ' All are too mean to speak his worth,
> Too mean to set my Saviour forth.'

And how wonderful will He appear arrayed in awful majesty and love, in vengeful frowns and blessed smiles at that great day, the day of judgment, when the last trumpet's awful blast shall proclaim, 'The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Then how wonderful His discrimination will be, when He separates the precious from the vile, and sets the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on His left! Ah! then will His despisers hear the awful sentence, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' That sentence, that dread sentence, will be pronounced with such a frown of burning ire that it will enkindle in their bosoms a hell of woeful anguish that shall never terminate; a flame of awful tortures that millions of ages will never abate, and an endless eternity will never extinguish. 'And these' (*i.e.* all who die in their sins) 'shall go away into everlasting punishment.' But O how will His wonderful goodness and mercy shine forth to the view of His dear sheep, when, turning his loving eyes towards them, he shall cry, 'Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Then shall all those once poor, groaning, and afflicted ones enter their predestined home, without

a spot upon their persons, without a wrinkle in their clothing, without a charge against their souls. For 'without fault' shall they be presented unto God, loved with love immutable, saved by grace wholly free, washed in a fountain perfectly pure, clothed in a garment spotlessly white, harping with harps wonderfully melodious, and shall bow with adoration before the throne of Him whose praises they will show forth with delight, in a song of which they shall never be weary while eternity endures.

"I shall now give another instance of the Lord's kindness in fulfilling His own promise, 'I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice.' Some weeks afterwards I sank into a sad state of darkness, deadness, and carelessness, and yet could not grieve on account of it. In this barren, hard, and careless state I remained for some days, until the Sabbath morning arrived, when I began to feel a little loathing of myself, a little desire rising up in my soul that the Lord would appear and melt my hard heart. I opened the Bible, without much hope of meeting with a word in season, fitly spoken by the Holy Ghost, but had not read many verses before I met with those blessed words, 'The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee.' No sooner had I read the words than such a sense of God's unequalled kindness towards me was felt in my soul as I am

altogether at a loss to describe. My flinty heart melted into wonder, love, and praise, and I felt a springing up in my soul of love to God in Christ, joy in God through Christ, and peace with God by Christ. The tear of heartfelt gratitude started into my eye, and my soul was so overwhelmed with astonishment at this unexpected mercy that I could find no words to express my feelings, but was forced for a time silently to adore; and when able to speak, I could for some minutes say nothing but O precious Jesus! Precious Jesus! Precious Jesus! My heart swelled with holy wonder, yea, my cup ran over; and I verily thought that the relish of this token of His goodness and mercy would follow me all the days of my life. With sweet confidence I exclaimed, I know that I am a child of God, for I feel the spirit of adoption enabling me to cry with humble assurance, 'Abba, Father.' This caused me to loathe the hardness and unbelief I had been the subject of, and the distance at which I had lived from the best of all friends, a 'Friend that loveth at all times;' and to beg of the Lord to keep me near His dear self, and never allow me again to leave the fountain of living waters. I do love to live near His wounded side, lie in His bosom, lean on His arm, bask in His smiles, smell His good ointments, drink of His blood, eat His flesh, sit at His feet, and sing of Him, 'A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O

daughters of Jerusalem.' During the month of February I was spending a little time at Potton for the purpose of speaking the word of the Lord; and when on Sunday it was given out that I was expected to preach there on the Tuesday evening, I felt as if it was impossible for me to find any fresh subject or matter to come before the people with. On the Tuesday afternoon I appeared to have no more spiritual life, light, or feeling than the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision. At length I became so agitated I withdrew into a room alone, where I fell before the Lord, and all I could say was, Help! Lord help! Lord appear! At length these words flowed into my soul with heavenly light, 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' And O what a blessed sight I had, by faith, of Him who endured the cross for a sinner such as I! My hardness now departed, the shadow of death was turned into the morning, and these words followed the former, 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.' Again I fell before Him, but this time I lay, in my feelings, bathing His dear feet with tears of gratitude and crying, O my dear, dear Lord, never let me dishonour Thee again. O the beauty of His

person, the love of His heart, the efficacy of His blood, and the freeness of His grace; yea, how altogether suitable did I feel Jesus to be to my case! The blessed mines of divine truth and glory which appeared in those words, 'Beloved, now' &c. (1 John iii. 2), I never can tell out to the full. 'Beloved!' Is it I? said my soul; am I beloved? Yes, my heart replied, He hath loved me and given Himself for me, and given the Holy Ghost to me, to bear witness with my spirit that I am a child of the living God. Beloved by Israel's great and sacred Three in One: beloved by the Father, and chosen to endless life; beloved by the Son, and redeemed from endless death; beloved by the Spirit, and delivered by His almighty hand from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And (O blessed knowledge!) when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. But where am I wandering to? I must return to say that, as I lay on the floor, such volumes unfolded themselves in the passage as I never shall be able fully to unfold. Sometimes I thought and hoped that surely the Lord was about to take me to glory, and I cried out—

> "'My willing soul would stay
> In such a frame as this,
> And sit and sing herself away
> To everlasting bliss.'

The thoughts of preaching seemed to be quite taken

away from me, and how long I should have lain on the floor, if I had not been disturbed, I cannot say; but when it was the time of meeting I heard a knock at the door. I rose and went to the chapel, and felt such enlargement as I do not know how to describe. Suffice it to say, I spoke from the words, 'Beloved, now' &c., and was, I trust, really anointed by the Spirit. I was afterwards favoured with much meekness of spirit and heart-felt gratitude to God; and begged Him never to let me indulge another groundless doubt, never to let me live at such a distance again, but to keep me near Him and help me to trust in Him, live upon Him, walk with Him, speak well of Him, and finally bring me to dwell with Him, and sing to Him unceasing praises."

The account from which the preceding notes are taken was written by Mr. Sears in 1841-2, and shows how deep were the spiritual exercises he passed through, and how great the alternation of feelings he was the subject of while doing business in those deep waters. Like most of the Lord's people in their early days of Christian experience, he at that time judged of his state and standing by the feelings which prevailed within him, and, therefore, was frequently unduly cast down and distressed with doubts and fears as to his standing in Christ, when he lacked the sensible enjoyment of His love and presence. Thus he was tossed up and down by many and great changes, but

helped and encouraged in the conflict by the Lord, who had designed a blessing for him which should give him a stability and confidence beyond what he had hitherto known, and should bring him into the sweet secret of living and walking by faith, rather than judging of his standing by feeling. Although still exercised with the plague of the heart, sin, Satan, and the world, and still knowing from time to time what it was to mourn an absent God, yet he was never afterwards so tossed and tried about his standing in Christ; neither was he left to sink into the other extreme where so many professors lie, namely, dry notion, a state of hard confidence, and a walk void of communion with God.

CHAPTER III.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS WORK IN THE MINISTRY, AND HIS LABOURS AT CLIFTON.

IN giving some account of the ministry of one who has been long and arduously engaged in the work of the Lord, and who has occupied a prominent position in the Church of Christ, it is not requisite that detailed particulars of a special call to the work of the ministry should be produced. Yet at times such particulars may be found both interesting and instructive; and on this account, knowing that Mr. Sears was very deeply exercised about, and clearly called to, the work of the ministry, we could have wished he had left a concise record of that part of his individual experience. Not that such record is needful to prove he was a divinely commissioned ambassador of Christ, for his successful labours and honourable and useful life give solid testimony to that. And well would it be, if the work, standing, and success of all in the ministry, who profess to have had a clear call thereto, called forth the same widespread and hearty confession, as in the case of Mr. Sears:—"THE LORD

HIS GOD WAS WITH HIM." From various sources we have gathered a few interesting facts connected with his early work, settlement, and useful labours for upwards of thirty-six years, at the village of Clifton, in Bedfordshire, where his memory is still dear to many who under his ministry have been led to Christ, and where a lasting monument of his work may be found in the hearts of numbers who are his spiritual children, and in the flourishing cause which, by the blessing of the Lord upon his labours, he was instrumental in raising.

It appears that Mr. Sears began to preach in June, 1839, when only twenty years of age, and spoke first at Dodington, as already stated. Soon afterwards he received an invitation to preach at Woodhurst, but feared to go, lest he should be found running before he was sent of God. His exercises concerning so important a work were very sharp, but on the Lord's day morning when he was expected to go, the Lord applied the following words to his heart with such power as to at once decide the question; "Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst; the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them."—Lam. iv. 3, 4. Thus, not only were all his fears removed, but he felt that if he forbore going forth with God's Word, which was

shut up in his heart, he should be worse than the sea monsters here spoken of; for if they cared for their young, surely it became him, for whom the Lord had done such great things, to go forth, and, by testifying of the same, seek to encourage and feed those who were panting for the bread and water of eternal life. At this period, and for some time afterwards, owing to his bodily affliction, Mr. Sears had to retain a sitting posture while preaching, and his head was supported by an iron instrument; but this did not prevent his travelling from place to place, as doors were opened, to proclaim the Gospel. And the Lord certainly set before him an open door, for pressing invitations came from many quarters, and almost wherever he went crowds of people assembled to hear him. Some, no doubt, were attracted by his youth, and others by hearing of his physical infirmities; while many came longing for the Word of life, and had their souls searched and fed by the young minister, whom God made very useful to this end.

After he had been preaching about ten months, he was assailed with the distressing suggestion that not one sinner had been known to be stopped under his ministry, and that this was a plain proof the Lord had never called him to the work. He says: "My soul went down under the temptation, and I felt ready to sink into the earth at the thought of having run before I was sent of God. But He helped me to cry earnestly unto Him that

He would make it evident I was called to the work, by bringing some poor sinners down under my ministry, and so piercing their hearts with a conviction of their ruined state, as to let me hear the cry come from them, 'What must I do to be saved?' This prayer was soon answered; for a morning or two afterwards a person called upon me before breakfast to say there was a woman ill in the village, who was in such distress of soul that she knew not what to do, and could not help sending for me to go and see her. I made some few objections to going; but after further conversation, and a little consideration, I said I would try to go. When I came to her bedside, the agony that was depicted in her countenance was appalling, as she exclaimed: 'O, I am lost, I am dying, I am dying, and shall surely go to hell! O, my sins, my sins! What shall I do to be saved? How can I hope for forgiveness? If I had been a common sinner, I should have had a little hope! But, O, my sins are so great, so many, they never can be forgiven! Lord have mercy upon me! What shall I do?' When I asked her how she first came to see and feel herself such a sinner, she answered something to this effect: 'Some weeks past I dreamed a very strange dream, and woke in a wonderful fright, exclaiming, "Oh, that parson! oh, that parson!" My husband asked me what was the matter, which roused me, and I found it was a dream. I dreamed that you had a quantity of

large handbills printed, and that you went about sticking these on persons; and wherever you stuck one on, it took away all their strength. You stuck one on my right shoulder and down my right side, which took away all my strength, so that I could not stir hand or foot; and this caused me to call out in the manner I did. This dream took such an effect upon my mind, that I could not help coming to hear you; and in the course of your preaching you said, 'When the Lord puts an earnest cry for mercy in a poor sinner's heart, He never leaves him till He manifests Himself to him as his God and Saviour.' 'These words,' continued she, 'took such effect upon me as I cannot describe; all my sins stared me in the face, and I felt that I was still in the road to hell, and had never had that cry put in my heart. From that time I felt myself completely undone, and think still that hell is certainly my portion; but a hymn I heard you read seems as if it was written on purpose for me.' She then repeated a part of hymn 378, Gadsby's selection, beginning with these words—

> 'A beggar poor, at mercy's door,
> Lies such a wretch as I.'

But every now and then, in the course of her conversation, her burden seemed so intolerable that she could not proceed without exclaiming, 'O! my sins, my sins! O! I am *lost for ever!*' In the course of a little time I left her, and never can

I forget her wild and distracted look (a plain index of the desperation of her heart) as she exclaimed, 'I shall never see you again; for, O, as sure as ever I close my eyes in sleep, I shall awake in endless torment. O, my hard heart! O, if I could but repent! If I could but pray, Lord, help me! O, that I had never been born!' In this state I left her, promising her that if nothing occurred to prevent I would call and see her again; at the same time assuring her that I could not conceive that she was anything like dying at present. After I had left her, I was told by her attendants that she had been in such distress all the night that she had kept them up the greater part of the night to watch her, and prevent her going to sleep, for she was sure, if ever she went to sleep again, she should drop into hell. I called to see her the Monday following, when she appeared much in the state she was in when I visited her before, crying for mercy and expecting wrath. She appeared to be assailed with a peculiar temptation, viz.: that it was in vain for her to cry for mercy, for the Lord would never pardon sins so great as hers, but would allow her to live until the next Friday, and then let her die and sink to hell. However, she lived beyond this dreaded Friday; in the morning longing for evening, in the evening longing for morning; racked with the anguish of her soul, with the wrath and enmity of her carnal mind, under the revelation of God's holiness in a broken law,

and with the weighty burden of her own sins. One morning she was blest with a little calm in her soul, raised to a little hope, and fell thus into a sleep for a short time. When she awoke, He who 'cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah,' revealed Himself to her faith as her Saviour, and whispered these words unto her soul: 'I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.' Her fetters now broke; her burden fell off; her fears took wing, and her soul was so sweetly assured that the Lord was her portion, that if she tried to doubt it she could not; if she tried to call back her burden and wretchedness, she was unable. After this she lived but a little time, and was seldom sensible; but whenever in possession of her reason, she would say she longed to be gone."

After this Mr. Sears had many encouraging proofs that the Lord blessed His Word, through him, to the reviving, instructing, enlarging, and building up of precious souls who, through grace, had believed; and many signal instances might be brought forward. We here give a brief account of one poor woman, living at Sandy, who, though taught of the Lord, had fallen into great despondency of soul, so that she had almost determined never to enter a chapel again. Being visited by some who spoke to her of Mr. Sears' ministry, she went to hear him, with a feeling that it was the last time she would go; and so it really was, though from

quite another cause than she had surmised, for she died suddenly three days afterwards. Such, however, was the reviving of the work of the Lord, and the deliverance wrought in her soul by means of the sermon, that she went home full of the blessing of the Lord, and thus proved the truth of that sweet promise, "It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light." No doubt this incident, with others of a like nature, was a great encouragement to Mr. Sears at the commencement of his work, when, being heavily weighted with bodily infirmities and deep exercise of soul, he had to go forth as a labourer in the vineyard of the Lord.

In November, 1840, Mr. Sears was invited to preach at Southill, Mr. Tay, who preceded Mr. J. Warburton, the present pastor, being at that time almost past preaching by reason of age and infirmity. The preaching of Mr. Sears was greatly blessed to several who heard him there, so that when his services were no longer required at Southill, many who resided in the neighbourhood of Clifton felt anxious that he should come and settle among them, and promised to turn some cottages into a chapel if he would only consent to come and preach the Word of life therein. Being greatly exercised in his mind as to the Lord's will in the matter, he sought earnestly for direction, and, after some little time of anxious waiting, the Lord kindly set his mind at rest with the following

appropriate portion of His word, which he lived to see verified to a degree far beyond his expectation: "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed" (Psalm xxxvii. 3). The fact of his being but a poor man, and most of the people who invited him being in a like condition, did not render the prospect of raising a cause there very promising, when looked at from a natural point of view; but, in the strength of the promise given, he followed the Lord's leadings, and the result fully proved the faithfulness of a promising God.

We cannot do better than insert here a very interesting account of his arrival in the neighbourhood of Clifton, given to us by Mrs. Wells, an aged disciple of the Lord, and a great lover of her late dear pastor for his work's sake. She said: "I recollect that Mr. Fane, one of the friends at Southill, went to hear old Mr. Warburton at St. Neot's, where he met with Mr. Sears, and felt so convinced that he would suit the friends at Southill that he did not rest till it was arranged for him to come there to preach. When the day came, I was too ill to go, but my husband went. He had been for six years in a very dark, cold, and barren state; and I much hoped that a word would be spoken by the Lord to revive his soul and set him at liberty. When he returned I could see by his countenance that it was so. He told me that the text was Job vii. 4; 'I am full of tossings to and fro;' and as

the preacher described the various tossings of the soul, the word was so blessed to his encouragement and profit that he felt like another man. This proved such a rich blessing to my husband, that whenever Mr. Sears, before his settlement at Clifton, preached anywhere near, he felt he must go to hear him ; and even to this day, although his memory fails as to most things, if you but mention this season his eyes fill with tears, and the way in which he speaks of it proves that he recollects it all distinctly. Many beside my husband heard him well that day; and as he was to preach on the following Thursday, I determined, if possible, to go and hear him. I went, and can truly say I never heard such preaching before. In a fortnight he came again, and spoke from, 'Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?' (Job iii. 23.) I greatly enjoyed that sermon ; it did so cheer and encourage my heart, that I should have liked to sit and hear him preach all night. He preached there once or twice afterwards, and the last time the crowd of people who came to hear him was so great, and the aisles and pulpit steps were filled to such a degree, you could almost have walked on the heads of the people, and I wondered how Mr. Sears could possibly reach the pulpit. After speaking in prayer, as he looked round on the congregation assembled, the words struck him, 'Shall it prosper?' (Ezekiel xvii. 9.) He spoke from them in a most solemn

and powerful manner, and the work so prospered in the souls of many that they could not bear the thought of his going away from them ; and though his faithful and searching testimony was too close for some, there were many who received the message and stuck to him till he died. In that sermon I recollect he said : 'I have a bird at home that is always full, and never requires any food ; but then it is not a living bird, it is one that has been stuffed, and, like many professors, never feels any want. But a living bird wants daily food, and so it is with living souls, they want daily to feed on Christ ; and then, with a loud voice, he cried, 'Give me a crumb of that great loaf Christ.' The night before Mr. Sears preached this last sermon at Southill, he dreamed that he was in a boat rowing off from the chapel with some of the people, which dream was fulfilled ; for while some of the heads of the church were not willing he should preach in the chapel again, many clave to him and begged him to come amongst them ; and Mr. Kempson promised to turn two of his cottages at Clifton Fields into a chapel if he would agree to preach there, which he ultimately promised to do. Whilst the work of alteration was being done, he preached once in a new shop which Mr. Fane was about to open for business, and the sermon was so blessed to some that they said it was a good way of opening the shop. When the chapel was ready we moved into it, and it soon became so crowded that it was not thought to be safe, in fact

we have seen some parts of the building shake with the weight of the people. We went on for some little time without a church being formed; but some of the godly souls who met with us were so exercised and led out in prayer about it, that, after seeking to know the will of the Lord, it was decided to form one, and six persons, of whom some are now living, came forward and united in fellowship accordingly. Four of them had already been members of another church, and the other two, who were led to cast in their lot with them, were baptised by Mr. Sears in the river, before a large concourse of spectators. From time to time others were added to them, and, after recovering from a long illness, I felt compelled to go and be one with them too. Many were the seasons of refreshing I enjoyed under the Word preached by Mr. Sears, so that when I read my Bible now I often come to some text I have heard him preach sweetly from, and I get back some of the feelings that I had when hearing. Few can tell how greatly myself and others miss him now he is no more with us."

We must here close Mrs. Wells' interesting narrative. She assured us there were many others who could tell us much more about him, and we would willingly have visited them all, but could not. Those we did come in contact with made us feel that this dear afflicted servant of God had left such an abiding feeling of affection in the hearts of his hearers, that

they did not know how to speak highly enough of his worth and usefulness.

Mr. Sears was married, September 12th, 1842, to one who proved a suitable helpmeet for him during his life, and arduous labours in the church. In the following year his life was threatened by an attack of typhus fever, but was once more mercifully preserved. And we have been informed that at this time he was first perceived to lift his head again without the iron support which was made for him at Cambridge. The surgeon consequently advised him to discontinue the use of it.

We shall now give a brief account of the formation of the church, as related by Mr. Sears in the obituaries of Thomas Bean and Eliza Field. He says in the former:—"When I first came into the neighbourhood to reside, in 1842, there was no openly recognised church at Clifton, and no communion in the breaking of bread. In the early part of the year 1844 it was laid upon my mind that it was wrong to live in neglect of the Saviour's dying injunction, 'This do in remembrance of me.' I was then often passing through much darkness and bondage of soul, and did not feel at liberty to go forward in this matter. Still I feared that this neglect of the Saviour's command might have much to do with my frequently doubting state. Prayer was made to the Lord again and again for guidance. At length these words occurred strikingly to my mind: 'Where two of you shall agree on earth

touching anything ye shall ask, it shall be done for you of my Father which is in heaven.' I saw that my right course was to invite a few friends to meet together and make this matter a subject of united request at the throne of grace. Many friends at Clifton, and in the neighbourhood, will remember John Cowland, a man of unfeigned faith, and they will remember, too, how heartily they could join in his prayers. One thing is very present with us about his prayers—that he never failed to pray for support in the solemn hour of death, and God very graciously answered his desires: for, although his was not a particularly triumphant departure, he died calmly resting upon Jesus. It was John Cowland's prayers, and the faith that God gave him respecting the cause here, that were our first encouragement to meet for special prayer for guidance with regard to our uniting in church fellowship to "show the Lord's death till He come." The first meeting was about the last Lord's day evening in February, 1844. There was, I trust, unity and *agreement* in our supplications. One request was for a renewed sense of interest in Christ, and some fellowship with Him in His sufferings, as a preparation for suitable participation in the ordinance that shows the Lord's death till He come.

"The following morning, while on my knees, I got remarkable help and guidance from Matt. v. 19: 'Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments,' &c., and Matt. vii. 24—27: 'There-

fore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them,' &c.; also from John xiv. 15: 'If ye love me, keep my commandments.' The two former passages brought such an awe upon my spirit that I felt I dare not go on to neglect the dying command of Jesus, and, at the same time, my heart was so drawn out in tender love to Jesus that I felt I must be among those whom He enjoins to keep His commandments. The same morning another friend, John Wells, was similarly encouraged and guided. Thomas Bean, too, received such a blessing the same morning as he thought he had never experienced before. He was on his way to Bedford with a load of corn, and Jesus suffering in Gethsemane and dying on Calvary was so put before his soul that he felt his whole heart melted through with tender love and sympathy; which caused him to weep such plentiful tears of sorrow over his sins that pierced the Saviour, and over the deep sorrows of the Redeemer's soul, that he could scarcely guide the horses. He felt that that wonderful hymn of Hart's called "The Wish" was answered in his experience.*

"On the following Lord's day, when we met, we were all agreed that our way was clear to unite at the table of the Lord, and were much struck at the remarkable and speedy answers given to our united prayer. Dear old John Cowland was especially

* Let the reader turn to it. It commences, "If dust and ashes might presume."

grateful. He had before this been much persuaded that God would bring us together around his table and that He would add to us many souls that should be saved.

"On March 10th, 1844, six of us formed the first gathering of the church at Clifton around the table of the Lord. Since then about 140 have been added to us, many of whom have died in the Lord."

At the end of the previous chapter we said that the Lord had designed for His servant a blessing which was to establish his confidence, and lift him above those fluctuations to which young Christians, who live more by feeling than by faith, are particularly subject. The sharp exercises of soul which arose out of his acceptance of the responsible office of the pastorate paved the way for this fresh display of divine favour; and, happily, we have an account in his own words, both of the trial of faith and of the faith-confirming blessing. The following extract is taken from an address to his church written at the commencement of his last affliction; and no doubt our readers will observe the contrast between its sober, chastened style and the vehement language of his youth—the "joy, confidence, zeal for doctrines, and strong statements of experience" to which he himself refers:—

"Soon after I became your stated minister I was much tried about my religion. In those days of soul adversity I was brought very solemnly to consider, and for the few years previous to 1850

none but God and my own soul can ever know the searchings of heart, the stripping, abasing, and mournful seasons through which I passed. I saw that my early religion, though it had been accompanied with deep distresses and high joys, and had set me firmly down in the great doctrines of grace, was sadly disproportionate and very deficient or shallow in some important features. I had made very much of depths and heights, workings of corruptions, strong detestations of self-righteousness, and strong adherence to the five points; but had not in the same proportion valued godly fear, humility, and such holy and lowly graces of the Spirit. It is solemn work when a great heap of religion amassed in days of youthful zeal and ignorance comes to be cast into the furnace, and so much dross appears with so much guilt of backslidings, and slavish fear, and temptation, that it seems as if there were no pure metal, while the awful fear is felt within that one's name may be found amongst those of whom it is said, 'Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.'

"I would here earnestly exhort young Christians, indeed all Christians, to seek continual increase of humility, godly fear, tenderness of conscience, love of holiness, hatred of sin, and such exercises as secret self-judgment, confession of sin, and earnest prayer; with searching the Word, and avoiding all that feeds the evils of the heart and weakens

the inward motions of the graces of the Spirit. Joy, confidence, zeal for doctrines, strong statements of experience, if not duly weighted with humbling, holy exercises of soul, may be accompanied with much sowing the wind, which will end in reaping the whirlwind. We cannot soar too high, if we *humbly* and *holily* soar. An exercised man has well said, 'Woe to the faith that checks repentance, and woe to the repentance that checks faith.'

"Never have I forgotten one solemn fortnight that I passed through in those days of deepened conviction and searching of heart. The third of Lamentations was very much my sad experience, and the doleful language of Hezekiah was mine: 'I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will He break all my bones; from day even to night wilt Thou make an end of me.' Like Job, I had become 'a brother to dragons and a companion to owls.' 'On my eyelids sat the shadow of death.' At length the Lord gave me to see afresh such beauty and suitability in the Lord Jesus to meet my sad, sad case, and enabled me to so betake myself to Him with all my guilt, and fear, and bonds, and Jesus so met me with that precious, ever precious text, '*Him that cometh to Me I will in* NOWISE *cast out*,' that I felt I had the solemn pledge and promise of the Faithful and True as a basis for my hope. I felt that as long as Jesus was true, I could not be cast out. I now under-

stood the sure foothold that a living faith finds in the Word of God that liveth and abideth for ever. How this made me understand the value of such sayings, as 'His truth shall be thy shield and buckler,' 'The Scriptures cannot be broken,' 'Thus saith the Lord;' and how rich in my eyes were such words as those of Joseph Hart—

> "'What Christ has said must be fulfilled,
> On this firm Rock believers build.'

I felt that I was come to Christ, and that under the foot of my sure hope that I should in nowise be cast out I had the very words of Jesus Himself. This text has been ever since a great backstay to my hope, for surely if there are two sayings that especially describe me in Scripture, these are they: '*To whom coming*,' and '*Him that cometh;*' and it is 'the testimony of the Lord' which is 'very sure,' the word of Him who 'cannot lie,' that *such shall in nowise be cast out.* In this solemn night of trial the *uncertainty* of voices, dreams, &c., made them 'a bed too short, and a covering too narrow' for me; and the *certainty* of the very unmistakable words of Christ describing me as one He would in nowise cast out made them of unspeakable value to my soul. I saw and felt, whatever gives way—

> "'His word shall stand, His truth prevail,
> And not one jot nor tittle fail.'

"Dear friends, it is a great thing to have a 'Thus

saith the Lord' for your hope. The Word of God is a sharp, two-edged, searching sword. Oh, the soul anguish that may come from a sent home reproving or condemning word! And the Gospel which is the Word of God, received by an intelligent heart faith, wrought by the Holy Ghost, is a most sweetly and soundly healing balm. The experiences of the years that preceded 1850, a year of blessed memory, taught me the wisdom and worth of that saying of Martin Luther: 'The plain unmistakable grammatical meaning of God's written Word is God's Word, and is the sure foundation and warrant of faith.'

"I have said the year 1850 is to me a year of blessed memory. It may well be such, for it was in June of that year that I received what I trust was a distinct witness-bearing of the Spirit that I was a child of God, what was the shedding abroad of the love of God in my heart by the Holy Ghost, the confirming testimony of the Spirit, and a blessed experience of the truth of that Word, 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.'

In a sermon on the death of the late Mr. J. C. Philpot (see *Sower*, 1870), Mr. Sears informs us of the means which the Lord used to thus instruct and establish him in the faith of Christ Jesus, so as to prevent him from being unduly tossed up and down by the changes of feeling and different frames of mind he was the subject of. Mr. Philpot was for some years accustomed to visit the neighbour-

hood, and to take part in some annual services at Bedford; and Mr. Sears tells us, "he preached on one of these occasions (in June, 1850) a sermon that the Lord made a special sealing blessing to my soul. It would be impossible for me to tell what my soul suffered at times for several years previously to this memorable hour. I was so fearfully harassed with darkness, guilt, doubts, and temptations, that but for being at times holpen with a little help in secret, and often much helped in preaching the Word, and receiving living testimonies of a blessing accompanying it, I could never have been kept from completely sinking beneath the waves of despair. I was often in the awful experience Hart speaks of in his hymn, beginning—

> "'Deep in a cold, a joyless cell,
> A doleful gulf of gloomy care,
> Where dismal doubts and darkness dwell,
> The dangerous brink of black despair.'

"Mr. Philpot commenced prayer in these words: 'O God, the Father of all who believe on Jesus;' and a sweet ray seemed to enter my mind. My hope that I believed on Jesus, hence that God was my Father, was revived. He prayed with much humility, unction, and fervour, and I felt my heart could join in his longing desires that the Lord would bless His own word. He read for a text, 'O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted! behold, I will lay thy stones with fair

colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones' (Isa. liv. 11, 12). While he described the afflicted, tempest-tossed, and not comforted one to whom these gracious promises are made, I felt as if I were sitting for my very portrait, but no great special power accompanied this; at length he spoke of the Lord Jesus, the heavenly Man, as comparable to the sapphire, a stone of a heavenly blue colour, and then very solemnly inquired whether God had ever laid His dear Son beneath us as our soul's foundation. I can never describe what I felt; a beam from heaven shone upon my path; a sweet consciousness that Jesus was my foundation filled my soul. My heart melted through. Tears flowed down my face—which are very uncommon with me. I dropped my head down in the seat, and could do nothing but weep and whisper over and over the dear name of Jesus, and say—

> "'O my Jesus, Thou art mine,
> With all Thy grace and power;
> I am now and shall be Thine,
> When time shall be no more.'

The next Lord's day, as many present remember, I got up and announced to be read the 103rd Psalm, and then said, 'This Psalm is this morning the very language of my soul.' Here my utterance was choked, I could do nothing but stand and weep for joy; and never shall I forget reading, as

my own dear language, between sobs of gratitude, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles.'

"I read as a text what I had longed to preach from but dare not do so, but what was now the very language of my heart: 'And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life' (1 John v. 20). Only a fortnight before this, I was in a complete agony of soul in reading this text, because I dared not use it as my own. In the evening I preached with unspeakable sweetness from, 'Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven' (Psalm cvii. 30). This was, I trust, a time when I was sweetly 'Sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.' I felt there was no fear in love, and that perfect love had cast out all fear; though after-experience has proved I was then and still am far from proficient in the heavenly art of 'living by faith,' 'holding fast the beginning of the confidence,'

'not staggering at the promise through unbelief,' and 'standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made me free.' You may well suppose this greatly tended to endear Mr. Philpot to my heart, and made me count those feet beautiful upon the mountains that had thus so sweetly brought good and healing tidings to my wounded soul."

Mr. Sears goes on to say, in the address before quoted from: "It was then with me not only a believing inference from plain Scripture statement that I was safe, but the *felt, self-evident, indubitable* experience of 'His left hand under my head, and His right hand embracing me.' It differed from the ordinary actings of my faith during the few years that preceded it, as much as saying '*My beloved is mine, I feel He is mine, His love is filling my heart, I am embracing Him, and He is embracing me,*' differs from saying 'according to this and that and the other text, Jesus *must* be mine.' Dear friends, an assurance warranted by and founded upon the immutable statements of the abiding Word must be safe, and no amount of enjoyment can make it safer; but it is a sweet, blessed, and desirable thing to have *the heart filled with the Lord's love.* Like as the inshining of the sun into a room brings with it its own darkness-removing power, so this filling with love brings with it its own fear-dispelling and assuring power. You who have truly come to Christ, who trust in Him, and as a proof are more or less daily coming to Him,

you can never perish, you can in nowise be cast out, for the Word of God shall stand for ever. You are safe, and should walk in the Lord's ordinances as believers, although you may not have experienced those manifestations of Jesus and realizations of the Father's love that you long for. And, indeed, I earnestly commend to you, in the name of Jesus, the path of obedience as the Lord's own appointed way to these manifestations. These are the words of Jesus: 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him' (John xiv. 21).

Thus was fulfilled in him that sweet petition of Peter for the elect of God: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Pet. v. 10). And from that time it was his constant aim to set forth and insist upon the doctrine of living, apprehensive faith in Christ, as being a far better way to solid, stable peace, than that of judging our standing by our variable frames of mind. But he was not one who advocated a faith void of feeling; for however strongly he might insist upon the actings of living faith, in going out after, reaching unto, taking hold of, and receiving from Christ Jesus the Lord, he ever earnestly contended for a vital, feeling experience of the things

of God in the heart, as the groundwork of that true obedience and holiness which becometh those who profess godliness; and however his teaching may have been misrepresented by some, those who knew him best can testify that he was a man of faith, feeling, and godly practice, and that to a goodly degree. Though his early religion was greatly sifted, he never cast away that living experience of the divine work of the Holy Ghost in convincing him of sin, and leading him to hope in and hang upon Jesus Christ for the pardon of sin and acceptance with God; but he prized that teaching which deepened the work of grace within him, and which, by enabling him to discern the difference between faith and sense, not only gave him clearer views of the foundation which God has laid for his people's hope, but also more firmly established the foothold of his faith upon the finished work of the Son of God.

The congregation continued to assemble for eleven years in the little chapel in Clifton Fields, which, although altered and enlarged in order to meet the wants of an increasing congregation, was still too strait for them, as the continual cry of new comers was, "Give us room." Whilst they were there they had been enabled to purchase the chapel, although the greater part of those who attended were too poor to contribute much, and the probability of having a larger chapel seemed very small. In this difficulty a kind friend, Mr. Wilson of

Clifton, came forward and presented the friends with a piece of ground for a new chapel; and other friends likewise assisting, a chapel was speedily erected, and was opened in 1853. Mr. Hallett, of Hadlow Down, Sussex, preached at the opening services. Since then galleries have been added to the chapel, through the kind help of the readers of the *Gleaner* and *Sower*. The burial ground was afterwards given to the church by the same kind friend who gave the ground for the chapel. In it lie several of the hearers of Mr. Sears, some of whom died at an early age, and whose lives, as recorded in the *Little Gleaner*, have been read by thousands. Amongst them we may mention William Devonshire, Edwin Palmer, Lizzie and Emma Farrar, and the aged father of the subject of this memoir. All of them left behind them such distinct evidences of God's grace in their hearts, that we know they rest in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection; while the last great day alone will declare how many souls were quickened into life, and how many distressed ones were comforted and built up in their most holy faith through the instrumentality of this servant of God.

In December, 1856, Mr. Sears met with an accident, in his home at Clifton, by which he was again brought near to the gates of death; but was once more raised up by the Lord, whose good hand had so many times been previously manifest in the preserving of his soul in life. And

when, on February 1st, 1857, he was favoured to resume his ministerial work, he delivered an address to his people, in which he made special reference to the circumstance as being a fresh display of the care and goodness of the Lord toward him in the hour of danger and in the time of suffering. From that address we extract the following account of the marked providence alluded to. Mr. Sears says:—

"The work of God's servants has been fitly described as the drawing a portrait of their divine Master, and hiding themselves behind it. Or, to draw an illustration from Scripture, hear what is said of the Baptist: looking upon Jesus as He walked, he said—'Behold the Lamb of God.' Oh, for Jesus to be walking among us, and making the place of His feet glorious! And, oh for anointed eyes to see Him, and a heart to be so ravished with His unsearchable beauties, that all one's soul might be poured into, '*Behold, behold, behold* the Lamb of God!' Oh, brethren, pray that my signally spared life may be wholly spent to His praise who is indeed the One that all heaven delights to honour. May the feeble candle of my gift burn to its very socket for this one purpose—to be the means of throwing, upon the path of poor and needy souls, a guiding light to the Cross.

"But although it is true that a Christian minister's business is to be as a guide post on the way

to the city of refuge, and to seek the salvation and fruitfulness of souls, by pointing to Jesus—not to attract attention to himself, yet there are circumstances under which reference to himself brings honour to his adorable Lord; and such a time, I think, is the present. It is indeed meet and right, that after the singular mercy of God towards me, I should here publicly rear my pillar of help, and say—

> 'Here I raise my Ebenezer;
> Hither by Thy help I'm come.'

And will you not, can you do otherwise than join my song of praise? O, is it not a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord? And, that we may see our causes of thanksgiving, is it not well to observe His hand toward us? for it is to those who are wise, and will observe these things, that the promise is made, 'Even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.'

"A few days after my late painful injury, I had much upon my mind the following Scripture, especially the latter part of it: 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death: that I may show forth all Thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in Thy salvation' (Psalm ix. 13, 14).

"In this text is (I.) a circumstance referred to:

the Psalmist had been down to the gates of death. O, solemn place to approach—the gates of death! Those solemn gates shut over a threshold that parts time and eternity! Ah! that is the threshold where the pleasures of sin, the pomp of earth, the wisdom of this world, and the treasures of the globe, have their mask torn off. There, all that is false and unreal, all fleshly, all graceless, Christless religion drops to nothing, like the pricked bubble, or the grasped phantom. O, solemn threshold to cross! Sinner, thy foot may be within an inch of it! The moment cannot be far distant—it may be within a few beats of thy pulse—when the hand of death shall swing back those gloomy gates upon their hinges; then, when thy blood ceases to flow, thy eye glazes, and thy heart and flesh fail—as thy foot treads the solemn threshold between thy life of sin and thy hell of suffering—how will thy heart then endure? Ah! the moment is near with everyone of us, when either chosen sins shall damn us, or a chosen Christ shall save us. Graceless sinner, sin is thy choice, and thou shalt have thy choice. It is a paste jewel thou art pulling at, chained to the awful weight of God's anger, that will fall and crush thee to that pit where wailing and woe for ever dwell. Am I not, however, addressing some who have been brought to feel it an evil thing and bitter to have sinned against God, and whose hearts, through matchless grace, have chosen Jesus?

Thou hast chosen Jesus to teach thee, Jesus to save thee, Jesus to rule thee, Jesus to feed thee, Jesus to clothe thee, Jesus to lead thee, Jesus to live upon, Jesus to die upon, and Jesus to feast upon for ever. Blessed soul, thou shalt have thy choice—'thou hast chosen that good part that shall not be taken away from thee.' The gates of death shut all thy miseries on this side of them, where they shut all the world's pleasures. It is but little, perhaps, that thou canst suck the breasts of consolation; but just as the graceless man gets but drops of hell here, and the full shower hereafter, so thou dost get but thy drops of heaven here—the full shower of thy felicity is beyond the gates of death.

"Since I last stood in this pulpit, I have been to the 'gates of death.' On the morning of the 17th of December last, I was made to mourn my barrenness and unprofitableness, and was brought with fervour to cry for subjugation of sin and a fruitful soul, not thinking the way the Lord was about to deal with me. I was about to pass through a doorway at the top of a trap-door opening, struck my head, and fell backwards, my neck striking upon the edge of the opening. The brain and spine were so shaken as to cause complete paralysis from the neck downwards. My feet were touching the very threshold of eternity. But for immediate help at hand, as my doctors say, I should in a few moments have been no longer on this side the

gates of death. Even though a man was at hand who grasped me, my coat was so rending, and his foot so slipping, that but for other assistance providentially within hearing, my head must have gone through the opening, and most likely I should have broken my legs, as they had slipped through a ladder.

"I was soon sensible of my solemn position, and fully believed that these feet would never tread again the steps of this pulpit; and this tongue that now addresses you would never be permitted again to proclaim the glad news of the love of God through the Cross of the Saviour. My heart, however, was softened. I felt I needed the chastening hand of God. I could love and bless Him for what He had done. I felt, and soon said, 'All's well; it is all right; I needed it; I will sing of mercy and of judgment.' And during the first few days of my extreme suffering, my heart was almost continually like a springing well; love, meekness, self-abhorrence, gratitude, and especially prayer, flowed freely from my heart; so that I look back upon those days with pleasurable gratitude; and trust that He who enabled me to go from pew to pew as it were, and pray for all of you individually, will show that He has spared me to use me as an instrument for the answering those prayers. Ah! my dear flock, it was you, next to the Saviour of sinners, and those who claim my heart in nature's ties, that my soul's

affection flowed to at the moment of returning consciousness. O for the conversion of dead sinners, the comforting of seeking mourners, the strengthening, reviving, and helping of all who have believed through grace.

"Has not the Lord, indeed, lifted me up from the gates of the grave? And has He not made this my heart's cry—join yours to it, dear brethren —'Have mercy upon me, by giving me more grace, more light, more zeal, more tenderness, liberty, love, power, strength, and gracious enlargement of speech, and consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me—my inward foes; regard the grief and shame I've felt, and daily make them more; consider my trouble, have Thine eye upon my sorrow, and make it more and more of a godly sort; that thus helped by mercy, and delivered from the power of sin, Satan, and the world, I may show forth all Thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion'? O, may my tongue, my pen, my life, my all, show forth to the profit of Zion the praise of a Triune Jehovah, in whose salvation I will rejoice, and set up my banner; while I raise my stone of help, and call it Ebenezer, saying—'Hitherto hath the Lord helped me.'

"O, 'tis good to sing His praises;
Join then, Christians, heart and voice;
Join with me glad hallelujahs;
In the God of Love rejoice:
Ebenezer!
Hitherto the Lord has help'd.

" Hitherto the Lord has helped me;
Hitherto He's borne my ways;
Hitherto His arm has kept me;
Sing, I must, His worthy praise:
Ebenezer!
Ebenezer let us sing.

" Floating round my Ebenezer,
May the incense-cloud of praise
Rise in sacred waves to heaven;
Rise in songs of Sovereign grace:
Ebenezer!
Ebenezer sing with me.

" But while songs of praise become us,
Shame is all that we can claim;
Low we'd sink in dust and ashes,
While we sing His worthy name:
Ebenezer!
Stone of help we'd humbly rear.

" Well might tears of deep contrition
Flow beneath the stone we raise;
O for hearts to loathe our evils,
While we sing the Saviour's praise:
Ebenezer!
We would rear with lowly shame.

" Shall not love so rich encourage
Hope of blessings great in store,
Fill our hearts with earnest boldness,
While we ask for more and more:
Ebenezer!
May God's love draw forth our prayers.

" Lord! we ask a life so shielded
May be spent to spread Thy fame;
O, for love, and faith, and wisdom,
Power to preach Immanuel's name:
Ebenezer!
Make a spar'd one wholly Thine.

" Help him to extol the Saviour—
So to preach His bleeding Cross,
As that numbers yet may love Him—
Count for Him all else but dross :
Ebenezer !
Thus far help'd, we beg for more.

" O ! may hearts of stone be broken ;
Broken hearts be sweetly healed ;
Here may Jesu's love and favour,
Be to law-wreck'd souls reveal'd :
Ebenezer !
Stone of help we'd raise in hope.

" All the wilderness before us,
Help us to commit to Thee ;
Shield us, bless us, guide us, use us,
Bring us then Thy face to see :
Ebenezer !
Well may one so shielded sing.

" When I reach the desert's margin,
See my pilgrimage is o'er,
Then assist my feeble vision,
To descry rich Canaan's shore :
Ebenezer !
Help my dying lips to sing.

" When I've cross'd the deep dark waters
Parting yonder land from this,
Then I'll rear, with untold gladness,
Ebenezers high in bliss :
Ebenezer !
I'll for ever gladly sing.

" Now, in hope's sweet expectation,
Earth would join the song above,
Catch the blaze that makes unceasing
Heaven's songsters flame with love :
Ebenezer !
Rear a pillar to the skies.

"Hitherto! sweet reminiscence;
God has help'd us hitherto;
Now we'd on His arm be leaning,
Trust Him all our journey through:
Ebenezer!
Hitherto and onward still."

For some years Mr. Sears resided at a long distance from the chapel, and this at times was very trying to him, on account of ill health and infirmities; but in 1867 he was enabled, through the kindness of friends, to erect near the chapel a minister's residence, which was opened on Wednesday evening, September 25th, by a meeting of Christian friends for prayer. The late Mr. John Kershaw, of Rochdale, was present, and gave a powerful exhortation from Philippians iv. 6, 7. On the following day Mr. Kershaw preached in the morning from an appropriate text, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day" (Acts xxvi. 22); and in the evening from Psalm xxvii. 14. In the afternoon addresses were given, and thanksgivings and prayers were offered, by brethren present; and many found it to be a profitable and refreshing season, while the pastor felt encouraged and strengthened in his work.

Mr. Sears had now been labouring at Clifton for a quarter of a century, to which he made special reference in a sermon preached on Lord's Day, October 6th, from which we here give an extract; the text was 1 Chron. xxix. 20:—

"In looking forward to the completion of the

twenty-fifth year of my labours in this village, I have felt that twenty-five years' sins and shortcomings call for so much humiliation that I have been ready to think that a weeping celebration would most become me. It has seemed that my sorrow would perhaps be greater than my joy, and that my feelings would present some such mixture as was found at the laying the foundation of the second temple, when the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people. Who, with his eyes at all open, can look back upon twenty-five years of failings, follies, and unprofitableness, without seeing that the deepest dust well becomes him? And though I am very far from being as humble as I have cause to be, yet I truly desire to refer to the Lord's dealings with me in the spirit of the Psalmist: 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and Thy truth's sake.' I feel that the grand business of a minister is to preach, not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord. I want the Lord's people to be sent away from this place of worship, not saying, 'O precious man,' but 'O precious Christ;' let Jesus increase, let me decrease. I want to be valued only as a guide post is valued, because it points to the city the traveller seeks; but I desire as greatly to differ from a dead guide post as life differs from death, and as a true traveller in the road differs from a post that stands

still by the roadside. Oh, for enough grace to draw out the affections of God's people, and enough true humility never to put self forward as something when nothingness is our true place! Yet, as there was a time for Paul to remind the Ephesian elders of his labours amongst them, so the present seems to me to be a time to remind you of the Lord's mercy to me, and to you and others through me. It is now a quarter of a century since God brought me to labour amongst you. At that time, although the gatherings in the old building were by no means small, yet the greater part of those who attended were without the means of doing much for the cause; but, from that day to this, I have never lacked any necessary thing. Indeed, I have to be thankful that while the Lord has never allowed me to court the favour of men by compromising truth, He has, nevertheless, given me favour amongst those who do not profess love to the truth preached in this place. Some who have never entered these doors have contributed towards the chapel. Oh, that I may have the blessing of the man whose ways please the Lord, so that he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him; but never come under the woe pronounced upon men-pleasers, 'Woe unto you when all men speak well of you.'

"At the time of my coming among you I was still suffering from a spinal injury, with paralysis, and attacks of rheumatic fever, so that I seemed

very little likely to spend a quarter of a century upon earth, much less travel thousands of miles to preach the Word of life. Since that time I have twice been brought to the very verge of the grave, and expect, as long as I live, to suffer from organic heart disease and other weaknesses; yet here I am, the living—oh, that I may sweetly add, the living to praise Thee! I do feel that the measure of strength hitherto given me has been greatly in answer to your prayers, which I must beg of you to continue. But there are other mercies to praise God for, besides my health and the supply of my needs: we have to thank Him for the building that He has given us to meet in; and, in recounting our mercies, we have cause to praise the Lord that one like myself, with no remarkable mental power or natural gifts, should have been helped to spread the truth in various forms far and wide, all over this land and in other countries. I have been enabled, for years together, to expend annually nearly four hundred pounds in printing, schools, orphan, and colportage funds. Many times have I been sorely tried, but I have ever found the Lord a very present help in trouble. And yet, whatever of outward comfort we may have, we should feel miserably dissatisfied if we had not to record instances of spiritual blessing in the twenty-five years that have rolled away. Have there not been many souls wounded under the Word, and is not this a cause for praising

the Lord? Would a man esteem it a small favour to be stopped when rushing towards a precipice overhanging a pit of burning brimstone? And where is a sinner in his sins rushing to, but to an endless hell? Oh, let us lift our hearts in praise that there are many souls here who have been arrested on their way to woe, and made to cry, 'What must I do to be saved?' and that the answer of God's Word to that question has been preached here: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Thanks to God's rich grace, He has not only used the harsh legal trumpet with killing power, but here has been blown with liberating power the Silver Jubilee Trumpet; here burdens have been lost at the foot of the Cross; beauty has been given for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Let us unite in praise and in prayer, that what has been done may only be the earnest of much more yet to be done. We long to see tens, hundreds, thousands around us, if the Lord will, brought to the foot of the Cross. In this day of abounding error we have reason to be thankful that we are still clinging to the whole truth of God: the great doctrines of the Trinity in Unity, the free election of the eternal Father, the full redemption of the eternal Son, the mighty operations of the eternal Spirit. These, with all other Bible doctrines, ordinances, and precepts, we desire still to contend for, as the faith once delivered to the

saints. I am the last that should speak of himself, but let me say to the Lord's praise that every doctrine and ordinance that I held a quarter of a century since, I still hold in all its entirety. Little as has been my progress, I am thankful that it has been progress instead of change. I hope I can see a little more clearly a place for every part of the Word than I could then, and am led to see there is a combination of different, but not differing, truths in the glorious Gospel of God's grace.

"Indeed, my dear friends, our mercies are countless as the sands. Oh, that our hearts may beat in grateful sympathy with these, and with many, many more loud calls for praise! Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!"

As a minister Mr. Sears, through God's grace, was a workman who needed not to be ashamed. It was his earnest desire to be clear from the blood of all men; hence arose those earnest warnings and thrilling appeals to the unconverted, which, as many can testify, were used by the Spirit of God to turn the sinner from the evil of his way. At other times he was given the tongue of the learned, and was enabled to speak a word in season to the weary and heavy laden. But he not only cared for the souls of his hearers, and those he came in contact with, but, like his divine Master, was touched with compassion at the losses, crosses, bereavements, afflictions, and trials of his fellow men. Seldom, if ever, did the afflicted appeal to him in vain, and sometimes

his good nature was grossly imposed upon. We write not thus to extol the creature; the dear departed would abhor such a thing; he ever felt a poor, vile sinner, and could feelingly say—

> "My best is dyed and stained with sin,
> My all is nothing worth."

Yet we read, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." And thus do the good works of Septimus Sears follow him; and the remembrance of this is as a sweet savour in the hearts and affections of thousands who loved him for his work's sake. We feel, therefore, that without some reference to these things this memoir would be sadly incomplete.

We will first mention the Day School commenced in a portion of the building which was the original chapel, the remaining portion being turned into cottages. It was a very painful circumstance which led Mr. Sears to start this school; a poor hearer of his, a married man, who obtained his living as a shoemaker, was out carrying a gun, which went off accidentally, and shot off his hand. Mr. Sears accompanied him to the doctor, and was witness to the poor fellow's agony of body and scarcely less of mind; for he had a large family, and with only one hand it was impossible to work at his trade any longer, so that the deepest poverty

stared him in the face. "How shall I support my children now?" burst from his lips; and immediately Mr. Sears comforted him with the promise that he would endeavour to provide for him. But how was this to be done? What could a man with one hand do? After consideration, Mr. Sears felt a school was needed for the children who were running about without any instruction, and this poor man might fill the position of schoolmaster. The plan was soon carried out, and several children gathered together, of whom some paid twopence and others a penny per week, the deficiency being made up by Mr. Sears, who was anxious that the children should be brought under a salutary influence. The man continued here for some time, till he found other regular employment, when he gave up the school. Mr. Sears at once placed in the vacant post Miss Kent and her sister, the orphan children of two of his oldest friends at Clifton; and they continue there to the present, the school being still maintained by the kind liberality of his widow. He felt a lively interest in the children taught in this school, and paid them frequent visits, asking them questions, and giving now and then a pithy address, and in other ways showing his concern for their welfare. As they grew up and had to leave the school he advised them as to their future course, and was the means of giving several of them a start in life; for all which their success and letters of gratitude amply

repaid him. Though not a father himself, he dearly loved the children of others, and by his kind manner, and cheerful and instructive conversation, he won them over to love him and look up to him with respect and esteem. Mr. Sears was truly a pastor, one who cared for and watched over the people of his charge, and very frequent visits were paid by him to the sick and the dying, by whom his prayers and comforting words were greatly valued. On one occasion he visited a dying woman and found her in great trouble respecting her little child, which she keenly felt leaving to the care of a wicked and drunken father. Mr. Sears, with his usual kindness, promised to take care of the child, which, after the poor woman's death he did; for the father cared nothing for his own offspring, and was soon in prison for robbery. The boy was placed with a person who consented to support and bring him up for a weekly sum, which Mr. Sears agreed to pay. From this circumstance arose the Orphan Fund to which so many friends have contributed. This child is now a youth filling a comfortable situation, and feels deeply grateful for the kindness shown him. Another child was taken from a travelling pedlar, who treated him so cruelly that Mr. Sears could not bear he should remain with him; and the man seemed very glad to be rid of his burden. This child is now about eleven years of age and is still supported by kind friends at Clifton, and the readers of the *Gleaner* and *Sower*. In

referring to Mr. Sears's visitation of the sick we must not omit one incident which he himself relates as follows:—"After I had been preaching in London, on the 5th of April, 1868, an aged Christian woman entered the vestry and said, 'There is a young girl lodging in the same house with me who is exceedingly ill, and very anxious about her soul; she wants some one to go and pray by her.' I answered, 'I will go,' and immediately went. On entering the room I saw the case was one of a very low type of typhus fever, and was for a moment startled at the thought of breathing an atmosphere thick with the darts of disease and death. I felt, however, 'God has unquestionably permitted me thus to enter this room, and the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation; therefore, as the poor sufferer is quite sensible, I will announce the Gospel in as few words as possible.' I did so, declaring in substance that there is salvation in none but Jesus; that a soul must be washed in His blood, or it can never enter heaven; that Jesus has invited the weary and heavy laden to come to Him, and has promised to give rest to those who come, and in no-wise cast them out. She listened with much anxiety, and seemed quite conscious that she was in an unsaved state. I asked if I should pray for her, she said, 'Yes, that is what I want you to do.' I fell upon my knees and besought the Lord not to take her away in her sins, but to give her true repentance and living faith in Jesus. At the end she said

I had asked for just what she wanted; and I then left. The next night she died; and one of the last things she said was, 'Give my love to Mr. Sears, and tell him the whole of his prayer is answered: I have found Jesus, and am going to Him.' Her end, though very painful, was most peaceful and blessed. I trust she has obtained mercy. How constantly are we called to walk amongst the dying and the dead! It was only a few hours since that I stood looking into a coffin which contained the marble-like corpse of one whom I knew when a little boy, and visited on his dying bed; he was, I believe, a brand plucked from the burning."

During one of Mr. Sears's journeys into Wiltshire he visited a poor cripple at Cricklade, one who truly feared the Lord, but owing to great infirmity was unable to leave his house to attend the service of God. Mr. Sears felt his sympathy so enlisted, and such a desire to help the afflicted, that he did not rest till he had devised a way of constructing a carriage in which the poor fellow could get out of doors and to the house of God. This kindness, with the spiritual communion between them and the benefit he had received from Mr. Sears's writings, so touched the cripple's heart that he could never forget it; and when a testimonial was being raised for presentation to Mr. Sears, James Keylock (for that was the afflicted man's name) wrote the following touching letter, which we feel may be not unsuitably inserted here:—

Sutton Bridge, near Cricklade, Wilts,
October 11th, 1877.

MY DEAR UNKNOWN FRIEND,

It is with pleasure that I notice your intention, announced on the wrapper of the *Little Gleaner* and *Sower*, of making a substantial presentation to the dear and much esteemed Editor; and, although poor as regards this world's goods, I cannot refrain from embracing the privilege of casting in my mite in the one shilling and sixpence which I have enclosed.

I was extremely sorry to hear of the dear Editor's illness, but pray that the Lord may abundantly sanctify it to his soul's good and spiritual prosperity; that the rich abounding of divine consolation may be blessedly mingled with the painful aboundings of tribulation, persecution, and trial, which he has passed, and is still passing, through. I well know what this is, being at present in the same path myself.

There is not one among the Lord's servants who has been made more useful to me than the beloved Editor of the *Gleaner* and *Sower*. Indeed the Lord has used him as an instrument both to my temporal and spiritual good, far beyond all others. Years ago, when I was deprived of joining in the public worship of God, and confined to a sick and solitary chamber, the precious truths set forth in these two magazines, especially the *Sower*, were marrow and fatness to my soul. Many times have they cheered and refreshed my heart, and brightened my evidences; and many a painful hour have they sweetened. The Lord has been good to me as one of His poor needy sufferers, who has been in the furnace of affliction now eighteen years and a half, in a continual bedridden state, prostrate and

helpless. The Lord's goodness has been wondrous. Some eight years ago He brought me, in a marvellous manner, under the homœopathic treatment, which has, under the Divine blessing, sweetly alleviated my sufferings through many a painful night and day, week and month, to the present time. Some few years after this, the Lord in a wonderful manner provided me with a little carriage, in which I can lie in the same position as I do in my bed, and am thereby enabled to get out into the open air, and to the public sanctuary. The Lord used the beloved Editor of these magazines as the instrument in bringing these things about; and his visit to Cricklade last May was indeed a memorable and precious time to me. Years ago, when he used to speak to me by his periodicals in my solitary chamber, I little thought I should ever see him, much less be favoured to hear him preach. Well may I say, "Marvellous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." It would fill many sheets to give you a full account of these things; but I felt constrained to make these few remarks, to show forth my love and esteem for the dear Editor of the *Gleaner* and *Sower*. I trust and pray that the Lord may support him, bless and favour him with His presence in affliction, and spare his life yet many years to labour in His vineyard for the good of souls.

Yours affectionately in the truth,

JAMES KEYLOCK.

Many monuments have been raised to the memory of those called famous and counted worthy of honour by the world. Although this

will never be done, nor is it required, to perpetuate the memory of the subject of this memoir, yet, in his disinterested labours on behalf of others, he has left behind him at Clifton a monument which will ever cause his name to be remembered with love and gratitude: we refer to the Almshouses, wherein the aged and the widows find comfortable homes till called to inherit their home above. The two almshouses named Pisgah Cottages, were erected in 1871, with money supplied by the kind subscriptions of friends far and near, and were opened on Thursday, June 22nd. A few friends met there for tea, after which they sang—

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,"

and spent the evening bowing the knee in prayer together before the Lord. After these two cottages were completed there remained a surplus in hand, which determined Mr. Sears to seek further assistance and build two widows' homes. These were opened on the 4th of July, 1872, with another meeting of friends, when Newton's sweet hymn—

"For mercies countless as the sand,"

was sung, several portions of scripture read, and prayer and praise offered by those assembled.

He had also a poor fund and a coal fund, which enabled him to assist the residents in these homes, as well as many other needy cases wherewith he was surrounded. His own income was always limited; yet, no matter how closely pressed he

might be for means for his own use, none but his heavenly Father heard from him about that; and although he would mention his charitable funds to friends, hoping to enlist their sympathies (since it was for others he pleaded, not for himself), yet even here he was looking to the Lord, who has all men's hearts in His keeping, and turneth them, like rivers of water, whithersoever He will. Many times has he said to his friend and deacon, Mr. Lenton, "How good the Lord is to me; He knows how low my funds have been, and how greatly I have stood in need of help. This morning, when I opened my letters, there was money from one friend and another, which just made up the sum I wanted:" and he always received these things as direct answers to his prayers. Though thus rich in good works, he was very free from ostentation, being humbly sensible of the defilement which attached to his best deeds. On one occasion he said to a friend, "I cannot drop a shilling into a poor man's hand, without feeling that it falls out of a sweep's hand, and is blackened as it goes."

We must now refer to the *Little Gleaner*, which is certainly not the least of the useful labours of the departed. Eternity alone can fully tell how many young lives have been benefited by the moral teaching conveyed through its pages; or, what is still better, how many dead souls have been awakened, and seeking souls encouraged, through the blessing of the Holy Spirit

resting on its contents. Previously to the starting of this magazine, there was, we believe, none that spoke directly to the young those truths which the people of God hold dear. In referring to the beginning of this work, we cannot do better than quote Mr. Sears's own words in the *Gleaner* for 1871 :—

"Your old friend cannot enter upon a fresh volume without exclaiming, 'What has God wrought!' Eighteen years ago next June, the first number of the *Little Gleaner* was printed. He entered upon the work with a trembling sense of his own weakness, and never thought himself more fitted for this work than other of God's dear servants. But he saw there was not, to his knowledge, a single juvenile magazine whose pages were unstained with the prevailing errors of the day, and thought that some lover of the truth who had the welfare of the young at heart ought to make an effort to furnish them with periodical reading suited to their capacity, and inculcating the pure truth of God. Since no abler hand was put forth to the work he ventured to commence, with his eyes up to the Lord for wisdom and grace ; and truly, on the 1st of January, 1871, he must say, 'Hitherto the Lord hath helped me.' The *Gleaner* now counts twice as many thousands as its first number did hundreds, and many have been the testimonies received of its usefulness. In the early years of its existence, its small circulation would have annihilated it, had not the kind providence of God opened the way for its second year

of existence, by enabling its Editor to earn money for its support, and by stirring up friends to give pecuniary aid. To these kind friends we owe a debt of gratitude, and hope they will accept our warmest thanks."

When the *Gleaner* was once fairly started, its Editor felt it laid upon his mind to commence the publication of the *Sower*, so that truth in a cheap form might be scattered abroad. Then followed "Sacred Musings" (which was a collection of his own poetry), "Clifton Hymnal for the Young," "Things that Shall be Hereafter," with various other useful works; and, finally, the valuable hymn book, "The Clifton Selection," which cost him much labour and prayer; but all was given willingly, so that the Lord's cause might in any small measure be benefited thereby.

Mr. Sears not only wrote and published truth, but did his utmost to disseminate it. The following anecdote will fully illustrate this. He was one day in a train, and the carriage was principally occupied by men that looked like horse dealers. Mr. Sears desired to give them some publications that he had with him, but his courage was failing him, when these lines dropped into his mind :—

> "If on my face for Thy dear name
> Shame and reproaches be,
> All hail reproach and welcome shame,
> If Thou remember me."

This was enough: he at once distributed the

books. The men looked at them, and some began to make fun of them, declaring they had done them good already. Presently a gentleman said, "Do you know Mr. Sears?" to which he replied in the affirmative. "Well," said the stranger, "I have long wished to meet with him and give him something towards his funds." It was not long before Mr. Sears made himself known, and the stranger placed in his hands a kind donation. Thus in a measure the Lord immediately rewarded His servant for faithfulness in spreading His truth abroad.

We have thus, in a few pages, summarised the labours of thirty-six years. They are quickly recorded, and still more quickly read; but few of us can form a correct idea of the work done by this earnest servant of the Lord. We can quite understand the testimony of his beloved partner that he never seemed to rest; no sooner was one good work set on foot or accomplished, than he commenced another that was laid upon his mind, and all this with an afflicted body and in the midst of great opposition.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS LAST AFFLICTION AND DEATH.

IN recording a few incidents connected with the closing portion of Mr. Sears's earthly career, we wish as far as possible to avoid referring to the words and deeds of those who rose up against him, and who, by laying to his charge things which he knew not, greatly embittered his later days, and sorely grieved many of the true lovers of Zion. But as we are called upon to give some account of his exercises under these trials, and in his last affliction, we cannot help making slight allusions to circumstances which we have no wish to revive, and which have already borne sad and bitter fruit in some parts of the Church of Christ. Therefore we wish it to be understood that our aim in recording these things is not to clear Mr. Sears of accusations which were wrongly brought against him, for that would now be most superfluous; nor to blame those who did him wrong by seeking to make him an offender for a word, since their motives, spirit, and doings are before Him by whom "actions are weighed" (1 Sam. ii. 3), and who "searches the

heart and tries the reins, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. xvii. 10). Mr. Sears had suffered with heart disease for many years, and such was the weakness caused thereby that he not only never could lie upon his left side when in bed, but frequently found the bed coverings too heavy for the feeble action of the heart to sustain. This chronic affection of the heart rendered him incapable of any great amount of bodily exertion, and also of enduring any sudden or excessive excitement of the nervous system, for although he for many years laboured most indefatigably in the cause of Christ, both by preaching and writing, yet the repeated and serious attacks of illness he was subject to bespoke his frailty and the dangerous nature of the disease. During the spring of 1877, having been much pained by an unfair criticism of his writings, wherein his words and meaning were so misconstrued as to make him appear to teach things the very opposite of what he intended, he was hoping to meet a few ministers for the purpose of talking over in a friendly way the charges made against him, but was seized with a severe attack of his heart complaint, which rendered him unable to attend the meeting; indeed his medical attendants assured him that it would place his life in danger, as the excitement would be more than his weakened state would admit of. In this severe ordeal, which so deeply wounded his spirit, he was remarkably drawn to the Lord's

feet, and with deep searchings of heart he sought judgment from Him whose servant he desired to prove himself to be. Nor did he seek in vain; his Lord and Master looked upon his affliction and pain, and gave him many encouragements and consolations. These, however, did not elate him with spiritual pride; under all, as a man of prayer, he manifested a chastened and tender spirit, which some who opposed him evidenced the lack of, and which in the following extracts is sweetly breathed forth in his private exercises before the Lord. In a private memorandum book, referring to the painful circumstance above-mentioned, he writes thus:—

"*February* 21, 1877.—This most deeply and solemnly exercised me before the Lord. I knew that man was often the Lord's sword, and trembled deeply lest the divine anger should be behind this sword. This led to many groans and cries that I might be brought to judge myself with true repentance before the Lord, that I might not be judged (1 Cor. xi. 31), and produced many sighs, groans, confessions, and heart searchings before the Lord, with much pleading the atoning blood of Jesus. I hope I did abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes; and felt I was 'well worthy wrath divine,' but that blessed atonement made on Calvary was my plea and hope. I felt, too, that, however vile I was before God, and whatever need I had to abase myself in His sight, these charges of error, &c., were falsely made for His name's sake. I felt He

knew that they laid to my charge things that I knew not. I thought much of the wave after wave that had dashed over me, and grieved that I had not more profited by the trial, and entreated the Lord that He would grant that the approaching wave might accomplish in me, by His blessing, what other waves had failed to do. I prayed that he would sanctify the next billow to the heaving my poor barque into the harbour of peaceful communion with Himself. Many were the texts I looked upon and longed should be my experience, such as Psalm xci. Oh, how I wished I were so dwelling 'in the secret place of the Most High,' and so 'abiding under the shadow of the Almighty,' and so making the Lord my refuge, even the Most High my habitation, that I could realise what it was not to be afraid of 'the arrow that flieth by day,' &c. How I wished, too, that I could say, 'O God, my heart is fixed my heart is fixed, trusting in Thee;' and that this were my experience, 'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord' (Psa. cxii. 7). But such blessed experience was not mine. None but God and my own soul can tell what I have passed through in the night time from physical weakness, arising from my old heart malady and spinal affection, accompanied with a sense of my own exceeding sinfulness and unworthiness, and sometimes a horror of thick darkness upon my soul. I could only say at times, 'Turn Thee unto me,

and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring Thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins. Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred' (Psa. xxv. 16—19).

"How remarkably suited to me were many of the Psalms! I have never understood as I have of late that wonderful cry of the Man of Sorrows, 'Reproach hath broken my heart;' and, when I thought of some whom I had esteemed as God's dear servants, and as 'the excellent in the earth,' how I entered into the words, 'It was not an enemy: then I could have borne it.' How remarkably suited to my case did that wonderful fifty-sixth Psalm often appear: 'Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up. He fighting daily oppresseth me. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up,' &c., especially that remarkable word, 'Every day they *wrest* my words.' I felt the Lord knew they put meanings upon my words that never entered my heart. It is when we are lukewarm in our frame that the Bible is but *little* to us. When either in real sorrow and soul exercise, with longing desires, or in real spiritual enjoyment, then it is that the Bible is *much* to us. Though I found God's Word now in many ways 'a searching fire in Zion,' and a cutting sword, I found it also a sympathetic companion. I felt in

the night, when looking forward to preaching, as if I could never rise from my bed to go to preach; but how wonderfully the Lord helped me in ministering His truth. Indeed I do not know that I have ever more sensibly felt the divine assistance in the pulpit than during this trial. This I have taken to be an answer to the many prayers of His dear people, both at home and abroad; for although, like Jesus, I have exclaimed, 'Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness;' by God's mercy, I could not add, 'I looked for some to take pity, but there was none.' No, I knew that thousands of the dear children of God sympathised with me. Sometimes I felt self-pity painfully at work and was ready to exclaim with Jeremiah, 'Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me' (Jer. xv. 10).

"One night, when in deep soul exercise, and remembering my own evil ways, and 'my doings that were not good,' and loathing myself in my own sight, and pouring out my soul in such cries as, 'Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish,' mine eyes seemed to fail while I waited for my God. I could get no word of God to reach my heart with the light and power I wanted. I entreated the Lord, if I slept, that He would open my ears and seal my instruc-

tion, even in sleep. When I slept, I dreamed that I saw, just outside my window, a hive of bees. I went and lifted up the sash, when in swarmed hundreds of them. I felt how foolish I had been to raise the sash. I took a small brush and tried to sweep clusters of them out that were in heaps on the window seat, but this only stirred them up, and they swarmed about me. One seemed to distinguish itself in rage from all the rest. It flew spitefully about my head, and buzzed in my ears, and I expected every moment to feel its envenomed sting. I swept it from my head to the table; but it appeared full of rage, and was just ready to rise and attack me again, when I struck it with the palm of my hand, and awoke with these words on my lips: 'They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns; for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.' When I was dressing, my heart was sighing with pain and crying with earnestness, and feeling nothing could enable me to hold up in these trials but having God for me. I wanted the assurance that, whoever might oppose, He would befriend me, and, whoever might condemn me, that *He would not* condemn me. I felt more afraid of God's anger than the anger of men. One smile —one blissful smile—of His is worth a thousand worlds, especially in the day of adversity; but His frown is withering indeed. 'Who may stand in Thy sight, when once Thou art angry?" (Psa.

lxxvi. 7.) His anger even as a Father is the solemn dread of His children.

> 'If Thou the least displeasure show,
> And bring my vileness to my view;
> Timorous and weak, I shrink and say,
> "Lord, keep Thy chastening hand away!"'

How often did I enter into Psalm cix. 28: 'Let them curse, but bless Thou.'

"While I was thus sighing and begging in the spirit: 'Hold not Thy peace, O God of my praise; for the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries; but I give myself unto prayer' (Psa. cix. 1—4), then these words struck me with much light and solemnity: 'The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.' This was the thing above all others that I desired, that, whoever might condemn me, the Lord would not condemn me. I was in the spirit of that passage, 'I will say unto God, Do not condemn me' (Job x. 2). It is as they realise God's frown or smile that His children sink or rise.

"I went downstairs and found the thirty-seventh Psalm—anxious to read the connection in which the words that were so striking to me were found, for I longed to be able fully to take them to myself. I read the connection: 'The wicked

watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it,' &c. I read, too, the whole Psalm; and how it brought me down before God with cries that He would not let the solemn denunciations of this Psalm fall upon the head of my opposer, but that He would give him repentance, and pardon his fighting against me and the words of Scripture.

"An hour or so after I was again upon my knees, and full of trembling about what was coming. I felt these words strike me with a kind of rebuke: 'And hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor: and where is the fury of the oppressor?' When I rose from my knees, I turned to Isaiah li. and read the connection of these words—I give them at length: 'I, even I, am He that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed,' &c. I

saw the marvellous suitability of all this to my case, felt rebuked for my cowardice, and longed for more faith in the precious promises of God's holy Word. There is nothing can make us understand and prize some parts of God's Word like the path of trial. I hope I felt humbled, and bore no ill-will to my adversaries. I only longed for their eyes to be opened. Very many times have I felt about some of the Lord's own servants: 'Oh, if they did but know what they are doing' (especially when I have been remarkably helped to bring out the Lord's truth with sweetness, power, and grace), 'how grieved they would be!' With all this I have continually felt my proneness to err, and my hearty prayer has been often that of the following lines—

'I ask a perfect creed;
O that to me were given
The teaching that leads none astray—
The scholarship of heaven.

'The one whole truth I seek
In this sad age of strife—
The truth of Him who is the truth,
And in whose truth is life.'

"How often have I cried: 'What I know not teach Thou me.' I felt a heart to earnestly entreat that, if I were making any mistake, the words of others might be the means of showing me. I wanted to be right. I wished to be guided into all truth, and neither receive nor reject anything on account of the party from whom it might come.

"One thing has often greatly exercised me, that is, that solemn word in the Revelation about 'the fearful' (Rev. xxi. 8). I believe it means the cowards—those who have not the gracious courage to confess Christ and His truth before men, when such a confession may expose them to persecution. I want that divine teaching by which I shall understand each separate branch of the truth, the proportionate importance, the mutual dependence and the harmony of each and all, that I may rightly divide the Word of truth, never be partial in God's law, keep back nothing that is profitable, and never incur the guilt of being ashamed of Christ and His words before this adulterous and sinful generation.

"Some time since I was reading that solemn portion in Jeremiah i. 17: 'Thou, therefore, gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.' The words, I believe, carry this thought, '*lest I break thee to pieces before them.*' How this solemn threat of God, if I did not speak all that He commanded me—and His command is, 'Preach the Word'—shook me through, and made me tremble at cowardice when the truth of God is concerned! I imagined the iron rod of God, some terrible blow coming down upon me and crushing me if I were unfaithful. How I cried to the Lord to teach me, and to deliver me from 'the fear of man that

bringeth a snare.' My great desire is to avoid controversy, and to live the rest of my days in quiet, solemn occupation with God and His blessed Word, with all my spiritual energies spending themselves against sin and self; in making my calling and election sure, treading that path that leads to an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and in this path to 'serve my generation by the will of God.' I feel as if I might even be ensnared by shrinking from bringing out truths that are unwelcome to some who appear to be ready to cry out against the very quoting of certain words of Scripture.

"My exercise of mind about these things might be the means of producing a remarkable dream, that contained a great deal more than I can so remember as to clearly relate it. I thought a boy of the Sunday school was being called by a nickname, which was 'Brassy.' I reproved this using of nicknames, and went on to say there is a being *brassy* in a very bad sense, that is, when we are bold in a path that is wrong: 'Thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass' (Isa. xlviii. 4). But I added, there is a being *brassy* in a good sense. I seemed to see a wall, and in one part of that wall were rocky looking pieces of brass; but there came over them something like a quantity of weeds hanging from the top, and I began to say part of these verses: 'Behold, I have made thee

this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee' (Jer. i. 18, 19). I had a sort of dim feeling of desiring peace and shrinking from provoking opposition, when I awoke with the following texts crowding together in my mind; but that which more fully struck me, and seemed to stand before all, while I was putting on my clothes, was this, 'For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. *Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread*' (Isa. viii. 11—13); and, 'To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them' (v. 20). I felt as if I was not to be so anxious for anything as to be *faithful* in dispensing God's truth, and to seek to sanctify Him; to have Him enshrined in my heart, and not fear or dread anyone but Him. How amazing is the Word of God in times of especial exercise and trial! Oh, that I had always prized and searched it more, and taken it for my sole guide, and had more deeply feared

God, then I should not be so beset with the fear of man! Oh, Lord, I am a poor, vile, unworthy sinner; cleanse me in Jesus' blood! I have but little grace. Oh, give me more grace, that I may henceforth be kept from everything that would bring upon me Thy displeasure! I am still a babe in knowledge. Lord, *teach me*, that I may teach others; and *keep me*, that I may never mislead anyone. I often think of Hart's hymn—

> 'Nor in Thy Church on earth would strive
> A pompous post to fill,
> For fear I might not well perceive,
> Or fail to do Thy will.'

"*February* 22.—The things referred to in the previous pages still much exercise my mind. I awoke early this morning with part of this verse being uttered by my lips: 'Fear thou not, O Jacob, my servant; for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished' (Jer. xlvi. 28) What a solemn difference betwixt the wrath of the righteous Judge of men and the displeasure of the loving Father of the elect family! How does my soul cry with Jeremiah, 'O Lord, correct me [the chastenings of God as a Father are to be prized], but with judgment; not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing' (Jer. x. 24).

"The rod of a Father is prized by the children

of God. We know He chastens for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. I feel I deserve the chastening of God, but I may well tremble for any who may be the rod in the hand of God. The Assyrian was God's rod towards Israel, but where is he now? All through Scripture we see it has been victims that God makes a full end of in his wrath who were His rod toward Israel; and individuals, such as Eli's sons and Absalom, were cut off in divine anger after being used to chasten His children. I have thought very much of a text in Isaiah that seems to look favourably upon me since I have been kept from indulging in a fighting spirit, and have been made willing to suffer instead of to smite, so that I have sought to lie down and be walked over. This is the passage at length: 'Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine: thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of His people, Behold I have taken out of thy hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again; but I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over; and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over" (Isaiah li. 21—23).

"While dressing this morning, I was begging of the Lord to bring me out of this fire in a right way, truly 'bettered by the cross'—

"So is the Christian purified
And bettered by the cross"—

when these words rested on my mind, 'I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God' (Zech. xiii. 9). Purging from dross, a spirit of prevailing prayer, the Lord's witness to our being His, and our being enabled to claim Him as ours—these are the fruits that the painful furnace yields when sanctified. How deeply I need them! Oh, may such fruits follow this furnace!

"*February* 23.—I felt very much deadness of soul yesterday, and each time I awoke in the night. I feel I have so much cause for close dealing with God, for deep humblings of soul, and fervent prayer before Him, that, however painful have been my feelings at times under this reproach, I choose to be 'exercised thereby,' because I long that it should yield the 'peaceable fruits of righteousness.' I have desired, both sleeping and waking, that my mind should be profitably exercised, but I feel the need of what Hart prays for—

'Teach us by Thy patient spirit
How to mourn and not despair;
Let us, leaning on Thy merit,
Wrestle hard with God in prayer.'

"This morning I had a singular dream, I dreamed

an old gardener came to nail up some trees that were trained on the garden wall. After he had cut one tree very much I went near to him, and expressed my admiration at the beautiful way in which he had done his work. I went away, and when I went to him again I found he had been to the blacksmith's, and fetched a number of very substantial, square-shaped, short spikes, and was driving one through each branch of the tree into the wall. I at once said I could not think that was right. He said it was perfectly so; nothing else would do. The tree, he signified, could only be brought to the wall and made permanently right in shape, and firm by this means; he said the tree had been too much neglected for anything else to do. After a time I was walking in another and more ornamental part of the garden, where was a tree trained up the wall, and having some branches gracefully trained to make an arch over the path. I began to say how very pretty it was, and that that was what I liked, when he said, 'Do you want to be merely a pretty tree to be admired, or a useful tree to bear fruit? Wait, and you will soon see the other is the better tree.' I awoke and sought to pray this prayer—

> 'When and wherever Thou shalt smite,
> Teach me to own Thy sovereign right;
> And underneath the heaviest load,
> Be still, and know that Thou art God.'

"How often have I uttered Hart's words before the Lord—

'Greatest sinners, greatly spared,
Love much, and themselves debase;
Mine's a paradox too hard—
Rich of mercy, poor of grace!
Me Thou hast forgiven much,
This my sins too plainly prove;
Give me what Thou givest such—
Much humility and love.'

"Lord, grant the cuts and spikes I have had may, by Thy blessing, lead to an answer to this prayer! Much—very much—and deep humility befits a case like mine. Much—immeasurably much—love is Thy due. Of these things a flowing river fits my case; but, alas! at best mine are but as drops and ripples."

After some months of weakness, caused by disease of the heart, aggravated by those very painful circumstances which we have alluded to but have no wish to detail, Mr. Sears was, on the evening of August 6th, 1877, seized with very alarming symptoms, which caused those about him to anticipate his speedy dissolution. But, even in these solemn moments when he, as it were, hung between time and eternity, the calm composure and settled peace he was favoured with in his soul, and the gentleness and sweetness of spirit he manifested, made it a hallowed occasion to his near and dear friends. Thus the Lord often so overrules the fiery trials His saints are cast into, that "out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness."

When his friend, Mr. Lenton, went in to see him, Mr. Sears said: "I think surely this is death. My poor stained work seems done. Jesus' work was not stained, and that is all my trust.

"'Done is the work that saves,
Once and for ever done;
Finished the righteousness
That clothes the unrighteous one.'

"Oh, that precious Saviour! I love Him because He first loved me, He is all my trust; I am covered with His righteousness.

"'Jesus is precious, saith the Word;
What comfort doth this truth afford.'"

And then again he returned to the same subject—

"'As they draw near their journey's end,
How precious is their heavenly Friend!'

"Ah," he said, "that's a good prayer some have found fault with—

"'Teach me to live that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed.'

"They did not mean to kill me, but they have done a great deal towards it. I can and do most freely forgive them. They know not what they have done; but they did not mean it. Strifes and contentions are not the thing for a dying hour; but I have the sweet consciousness that I have spoken God's truth, and that I am right and they are wrong." Then, referring to a minister with

whom he had formerly been on most intimate terms, he said, "How I should like to send my love to Mr. ——. I believe we shall be together in glory."

The entire prostration which ensued from this attack was such as to take away all hope of his being, for some time at least, able to resume his duties as pastor. He therefore, by the advice of his medical attendants and friends, decided to seek rest and quiet, as the only means likely to alleviate his sufferings. He accordingly went to Brighton for a change, but before going there he penned the address to his church from which we have previously quoted, and the remainder of which we now give. In it he rehearses the several points which were the constant theme of his ministry, and which he sought thus to impress afresh upon their minds when he was not able to deliver them, as he had been wont to do, from the pulpit. He says:—

"MY DEAR FRIENDS,—It hath pleased the Lord in very faithfulness to lay upon me His afflicting hand, and thus to hinder me from preaching to you with my voice the unsearchable riches of Christ. At this I would not, and by the Lord's mercy do not, complain, but rather reverently and gratefully bow before the Lord, and praise Him that He has graciously allowed me to preach among you for so many years as He has the Gospel of rich grace. This should excite the more gratitude, as, when I commenced to labour among you, I had so little

bodily strength that the most sanguine scarce hoped that I should be enabled to continue my labours so long. All these years I have gone in and out among you I have more or less suffered from a valvular affection of the heart. The last two or three years I have been conscious of increased weakness and inconvenience from this cause. No doubt exercises of mind, conflicts with sin and Satan and unbelief, much anxious occupation with oppositions, and all the exercises of heart occasioned thereby, have tended to bring about the crisis which has laid me aside from public speaking in the Lord's name."

After referring to his exercises during the years preceding 1850, and the great blessing that he received in that year (see the quotation taken from this address in chapter III.), Mr. Sears continues:—

"You must not suppose that since 1850 I have had a path of unclouded sunshine, or lived a life of freedom from conflict. Very far from such a life has mine been. Many have been my days of darkness, and fierce and bitter has often been the battle I have fought with sin, Satan, earth, and unbelief; would that I could say I have always been victorious in the strife. And while I confess this, I must take all the blame and shame and confusion of face to myself. Never, dear friends, seek to put a plate of steel betwixt your conscience and godly sorrow for sin, by treating the power and prevalence of your evils as if they were to be traced to divine

sovereignty, instead of their true source, your own bad hearts, and your negligence of God's means of victory and blessing.

"Nor must you, dear friends, think I have had no seasons of clear shining since then. God has from time to time been very gracious to me at the voice of my cry, and has shone upon His own Word and work, and Jesus has come over all the mountains of my sin, fears, barrenness, backslidings, and unworthiness, and made Himself sweetly present and precious to my soul. Especially He did this in December, 1855, when I seemed suddenly on the brink of eternity. And now, again, has the love of Jesus sweetly filled my heart, and that at a time when heart and flesh seemed failing, and the solemnities of an eternal world appeard to be breaking upon me. I was suddenly seized with what I thought must be the giving way of some vessel near the heart, when the cry was forced from me, 'Prepare me, gracious God, to stand before Thy face!' I felt growing worse, but the Lord gave me such a faith's grasping of Jesus and His finished work, and such a sense of the exceeding preciousness of the Saviour, as melted my heart, and obliged me to keep saying such words as, 'Precious Jesus! Jesus is so precious! Oh, he is so precious! He is all my trust!' I felt the truth of that precious saying, 'There is no fear in love;' and though I thought I must be in the river of death, like Hopeful I could feel the bottom, and it

was good. And though conscious that all I had ever done in the Lord's service had sin enough about it to damn me for ever, and, therefore, needed washing in the blood of Jesus; yet my heart was filled with gratitude, being fully persuaded that what I had preached to you was the solemn truth of God, and would stand for eternity. I seemed, dear friends, at that solemn time to have two broken hearts. I thought I was dying of a broken heart, but by the great grace of God I had a heart broken with a sense of the preciousness of Jesus. Oh, dear friends, none but Jesus will do for a dying hour! Nothing but His blood can give peace to a living, enlightened conscience when eternity is dawning upon the soul! I felt, too, how safe a foundation a crucified Christ furnishes for a poor sinner's trust. Dear tremblers, rest all your weight upon Jesus. 'He is a rock; His work is perfect.'

> "'The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
> He will not, He will not, desert to His foes;
> That soul though all hell should endeavour to shake,
> He'll never, no never, no never forsake!'

"What you want, in view of eternity, is that that meets the claim of holiness, removes the ire of justice, opens an honourable channel for love, mercy, and grace, and takes the sting from death by taking guilt from the conscience; and nothing can do this but a bleeding Jesus, seen by faith. Nothing will satisfy the yearnings of a gracious heart, commend itself to an enlightened under-

standing, and give sound peace to a quickened conscience, but that blessed atonement which Jesus wrought. I have always felt to be but weak in faith, but in this solemn hour I found the truth of what I have often told you:—It is not the strength of our faith that is our security, but the strength of the object of our faith. A baby foot may press a rock, and be upborne as securely by it as the foot of a giant. It is indeed true—my favoured, though exceedingly unworthy soul felt it to be true in those suffering moments—Jesus is

> "'So strong to deliver, so good to redeem,
> The weakest believer that hangs upon Him.'

You must all soon die; what I urge you to highly prize and seek an increase of, is direct trust in Jesus, accompanied with, and leading to, loving and serving Jesus. These things are wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the use of the Lord's own appointed means.

"Whatever may be the Divine will about me for the future, it is quite clear there is no prospect of my resuming my ministerial labours among you for many months to come. I feel it right at the close of September to resign my office amongst you for a half-year, that I may have that rest and use those means that my case seems imperatively to call for. In thus, at least temporarily, resigning my position among you, I desire—

"First, To bow before the Lord and judge myself for all my shortcomings, ignorance, negligence, cold-

ness, and every evil that has polluted my poor services among you. Oh, unspeakable mercy, that there is a fountain to wash our robes as well as our persons. Oh, blessed, blessed Jesus! Thou greater than Aaron, who bearest the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel do sanctify, purge, O purge away the stains of my poor ministry, and of these poor, soiled confessions of those stains. I wish, too—

"Secondly, To ask you all to pardon all my negligence, want of zeal, love, tenderness, or anything that has at any time hurt any of your minds. Our trespasses against each other, known or unknown, call forth the tear of penitence, and need the fountain of blood, and the mantle of that tender charity that covereth a multitude of sins.

"Thirdly, I wish dear friends, to remind you of some of the topics of my ministry amongst you, and I desire to do this, not as exalting my poor, feeble, stained labours, but as exalting and seeking recall to your memory and move you to solemn meditation upon the all-important truths that I have been so long allowed to minister to you in the Lord's name. While prizing a connected system of divinity, founded upon and sustained by the sure Word of God, I have not been so much disposed to put such a system before you in the order in which the truths of the Word are generally and wisely arranged in systematic theology, as I have been anxious to bring the truth before you in the

order in which the Holy Spirit causes it to bear effectually upon the heart.

"One of the truths I have endeavoured to make very prominent is *the infinite, immutable holiness and justice of God as displayed in His righteous law;* for I am quite sure that an intelligent apprehension and a godly experience of the principles which obtain in the courts of equity discovered in the righteous law to which all are amenable, underlies all sound knowledge and living experience of the whole truth of God, revealed in His holy Word. And I am also persuaded that an application by the Holy Ghost of God's holy law to the conscience is needful for the true knowledge of sin (Rom. iii. 20), the stopping the sinner's mouth before God (Rom. iii. 19), the bringing him to feel that, as a fallen, guilty law-breaker, he stands justly condemned to death, and the killing him to his own righteousness, wisdom, and strength (Rom. vii. 9). While preaching the broad claim and terrible penalty of the broken law, I have longed that poor sinners who listened might be 'taught out of God's law that they might get rest from the days of adversity, while the pit is digged for the wicked' (Psa. xciv. 13, 14), that they might hear and learn of the Father in order to their 'coming to Christ' (John vi. 45). For—

> 'Who but the soul that's led to know
> How just and holy is the law
> Will to the cross of Christ repair,
> And seek salvation only there?"

"Another truth I have sought to put before you in a scripture light is *man's fallen, lost, helpless, blind, dead condition through the fall, with all the terrible consequences in life, death, the judgment, and an everlasting hell of woe, if grace prevent not.* I have done this with a consciousness that 'the whole need not the physician, but they that are sick,' that Jesus 'came not to call the righteous, but sinners,' and with a longing desire that the blessed Spirit would use His own truth to

> 'Quicken souls and make them cry,
> Jesus, save me, or I die.'

"I have, too, sought earnestly to put before you *the absolute necessity of the new birth, and of its sure outcome, 'repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.'* And when I have urged poor sinners to consider these thing (Psa. l. 22), and knowing the terror of the Lord have persuaded men (2 Cor. v. 11) to ponder these solemn truths, and to repeat them to themselves in their meditations, I have done so feeling my responsibility to God, to seek to be 'pure from the blood of all men' (Ezek. xxxiii. 8, 9; Acts xx. 26), and to use earnestly God's appointed means of stopping His elect on the broad road which all by nature choose, viz., the preaching the Word, the whole Word—and that with a sincere desire that the poor sinners who hear me should not all be like those on the wayside who 'hear the word of the kingdom, and

understand it not; and then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that that was sown in their hearts'; but that God the Holy Ghost would bless His own appointed means and apply His own mighty truth to sinners' hearts, to answer the great ends of covenant love.

"It has been, too, my wont to declare all the above truths as leading on to the main theme of the Gospel—*Jesus, precious Jesus; Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners.* Immanuel, the eternal Son of God and the holy Son of Man in one glorious mediatorial Person, represents in God's judicial courts all who ever were or ever shall be led to fly to Him for refuge, and there for them most fully and gloriously meets and magnifies every claim of God's righteous law, having suffered its whole penalty, so that an end is made of their sins, reconciliation is made for their iniquities, and everlasting righteousness is brought in; and in proof of all this, God the Father hath raised Him from the dead, and given Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in a God whose holiness is honoured, whose justice is satisfied, and whose love, mercy, and grace are displayed in the pardon, justification, sanctification, and glorification of all who are brought to dig deep and to build upon the one Rock foundation laid for a sinner's hope, a crucified, risen, and interceding Saviour.

"I have, too, lovingly sought to set forth before your eyes, to picture out to you in gospel invita-

tions, promises, declarations, figures, parables, &c., the unspeakable love and tenderness of Jesus to poor, burdened, penniless, lost, longing, coming, thirsting sinners, who are made sensible of their nakedness and misery (Rev. iii. 18), and cry with the poet—

> 'Black, I to the fountain fly—
> Wash me, Saviour, or I die.'

I have never doubted the helplessness of the poor convinced sinner to come to Christ. This has been too clearly before my eyes in the very words of Jesus: 'No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him,' and has been too much forced upon me by years of painful experience for me to doubt it. On the other hand, I have not dared to impugn, but have gratefully adored the wisdom and grace shown in the divine method of addressing poor sinners, who want salvation from guilt and wrath, and thirst for peace with God. I have sought to faithfully and lovingly echo the precious call of wisdom to her rich and free banquet. 'Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding' (Prov. ix. 4—6). I have been glad to be made, as it were, the bellman of my most benevolent, loving Master, and in His name to lift my voice and announce His own precious invitatory proclama-

tion: 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.' 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon' (Isa. lv. 1, 7). And this has been to me as the drawing out of a breast of consolation, from which my own soul has received the precious milk of gospel encouragement. I have felt it a sweet privilege to reiterate the Saviour's precious, *Come, come, come,* to the labouring and heavy laden, and to any man who thirsts (Matt. xi. 28; John vii. 37); and am thankful to have had no difficulty, but sweet freedom in following the Apostolic track, the meeting the cry of those who exclaim, 'What must I do to be saved?' with 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved'—a track in which it must be safe to plant our ministerial footsteps, for it has been trodden by inspired feet. Men led in the exercise of the ministry by the infallible Spirit of truth, must, where thus led, form a reliable model to their successors in the path of preaching the Gospel. When thus giving out to willing souls the sweet words of gospel invitation and welcome to 'Whosoever will' to 'take the water of life freely,' I have had my eyes up to the blessed Spirit of grace and power that He who had convinced poor sinners of

their sin and ruin would make His own sweet invitations effectual to the drawing them to the Lord Jesus, and the enabling them by precious faith to 'take the water of life freely.'

"I have likewise taken sweet pleasure in proclaiming the precious promises of the Word to 'callers upon the name of the Lord,' 'mourners,' 'hungerers and thirsters after righteousness,' seekers of Jesus, comers to Jesus, longing souls, waiters at the posts of Wisdom's doors, &c., endeavouring to show them that such promises give sure foothold for their hope, and furnish them with a prevailing plea before God for their fulfilment; seeking thus, by the Lord's blessing, to assure them that, however much their faith in these promises may be tried by delays and contraries, unbelieving doubts, temptations and sins, the promises are yea and amen, and never were forfeited yet; and I do, from this chamber of solitude and affliction, declare to all poor seeking souls who may read or hear these lines read, that Jesus is faithful, and will prove Himself faithful to His own blessed Word in their case: 'Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

"I have also sought to be a means of showing seeking souls what is scripturally the object to be sought after. It is Jesus as revealed in the Gospel, built upon, looked to, trusted in, and received by faith of the operation of God. It is the power of

the Holy Ghost put forth, enabling them to fly to the refuge, and to grasp in the hand of a confiding faith the hope set before us in the Gospel. For, as godly Hart says:—

> 'Only by faith in Jesu's blood,
> The sinner finds release.'

This is being 'made wise unto salvation through faith, which is in Christ;' this is 'having the righteousness, which is of God by faith;' this is 'believing in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.' And this finding, this reaching the refuge, this receiving the best robe, this taking the water of life freely, this building upon the Rock—Christ, is what I heartily believe all the true people of God are brought to experience with more or less distinctness before they leave this world.

"It has been, too, my continual endeavour to show from the Word of God what lies at the back of a sinner's regeneration, repentance, and faith in Jesus; and what are the privileges, obligations, and prospects of the favoured partakers of these blessings. 'Receiving Christ' or 'believing in His name' (terms used synonymously in John i. 12), has at the back of it the new birth, for those who thus receive Christ or believe on His name were born of God (ver. 13). That new birth has at the back of it nothing hereditary, for it is 'not of blood;' no will of a man's own nature, for it is

'not of the will of the flesh;' no will of man, for it is 'not of the will of man;' but this privilege of regeneration has at the back of it the will of God, and this is free sovereign election, or, to use the Scripture phrase, is 'election of grace;' and grace is the antipodes of merit. A thing that is of works cannot be of grace (Rom. xi. 5, 6). Or to take another view from the cross: every poor sinner brought to the foot of the cross, however weak his faith, has scriptural ground to believe that his being brought to the blood is the result of his being bought by the blood. It is 'the ransomed of the Lord' who 'return and come.' Jesus said, 'I lay down My life for My sheep.' The sheep are bought. He says also, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring.' The sheep are brought. To glance again from the same rich shelter of safety and centre of blessing, the cross of Christ, I have sought to prove that he who is drawn to Christ, has a right to conclude himself given to Christ, and that, in consequence of being loved with an everlasting love, 'All that the Father giveth Me,' says Jesus, 'shall come to Me.' He then who is come to Christ is declared in Scripture to be given to Christ. Poor drawn one, the Father's giving you to Christ before all worlds lies at the back of your being drawn, and the Father's free love to you lies at the back of your being given to Christ. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-

kindness have I drawn thee.' He who is drawn by lovingkindness in time was loved before time, is loved with a love not counted by created cycles; he is loved with an everlasting love, a love that never began, never changes, never increases, never diminishes, never ends. Here is the divine chain of causes and effects: link one, sovereign love; link two, given to Christ; link three, redeemed by Christ; link four, born of God; link five, as sensible sinners, made willing in the day of Christ's power, brought to receive Christ, *i.e.*, to believe on His name; and link six, blessed with power to become the sons of God. Ponder well John i. 12, 13.

"This was the method the Holy Ghost led the Apostles to take in their ministry. They were led, first, as we see in Acts, to warningly deal with men about their lost state as sinners, and the only way of escape from the wrath to come, and to urge upon them the necessity of 'repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;' and to direct awakened ones to Jesus as an able and willing Saviour. The Holy Ghost having applied these truths to the leading poor sinners to feel their ruin, and to fly to the Lord Jesus for refuge, they were led in their epistles to believers to trace their calling up to their redemption by Christ, and their election and blessing in Christ before all worlds.

"I have sought, in accordance with John i. 12,

to prove to believers in Christ that they are the children of God, and that their privilege is to say, 'Abba, Father;' for 'As many as received Him, to them gave He power" (right or privilege) "to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His name.' 'Ye are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus' (Gal. iii. 26). True, as I have learned by experience, the might of the Holy Ghost is needed to enable a believer to take up his right, and to say what it is his privilege and right to say, 'Abba, Father;' but knowing that the Holy Ghost works by means of the truth, it has been mine to endeavour to prove from the Scriptures to the most trembling receivers of Christ that God is their covenant Father: and this I have desired to do, looking to the witnessing Spirit to cry in the hearts of His regenerated believing ones 'Abba, Father.' (Gal. iv. 6.)

"It would be necessary to fill many pages with scripture declarations and promises in order to give any adequate account of the many and great privileges that belong to true believers, but that would swell this already long address far beyond what I had any intention to write when I commenced it many days since.

"It has also been my aim to point out to all the regenerated receivers of Christ that have been led to obey His sweet Gospel call to come heavy laden to Him, and in Him have found rest, that they should now seek grace to obey the sweet

voice of Jesus their Saviour, King, and Prophet, who in loving accents bids them take His yoke upon them, and learn of Him who is meek and lowly in heart, and promises that in this path of subjection to His rule as a King and His teaching as a Prophet they shall find rest to their souls (Matt. xi. 28—30). Dear children of God, the Son has made you free, but your freedom is not lawlessness. The Saviour's yoke is not a yoke of bondage. His law is 'the perfect law of liberty' (James i. 25). It is law, it is a 'yoke,' it is a 'burden' of obligations, but it is a law of *liberty*, an easy yoke, and a light burden. He who has reached the cross, however totteringly, he who knows in his soul's experience in any measure that look to Christ crucified, which is the counterpart of the look of the bitten Israelites to the brazen serpent, not only has scriptural warrant to seek in the might of the Spirit of truth and grace to go in and possess the whole Canaan of gospel privileges, but should seek to take practically as his holy, profitable, God-glorifying heritage all the directions and precepts of the Gospel of Jesus; for this is the Saviour's easy yoke and light burden: and he it is who should seek to learn at the feet of Christ all the revealed will of His heavenly Father, for this is 'learning of Him, who is meek and lowly in heart.' Commands from Jesus are commands of love. They are not uttered in imperative thunder peals, nor enforced by the

lightning flash, like the voice of words from Sinai. They are wet with the dew of Zion, and are the beseechings of tender love for our own profit and for the glory of God, and not the imperative thou shalts of the law of works. Dear friends, much, very much cause have I in looking back to lament my want of daily conformity to the precious directions of the Gospel of Jesus, and desire you will never copy my failings, but seek to tread in the footsteps of Jesus, the only infallible Leader. I especially urge upon you the gracious parting directions of Jesus to His disciples in John xiii., xiv., xv., and xvi. May the blessed Spirit of all grace lead us all into the path of obedience to these imperishable and precious sayings of a loving Saviour.

"I must, before I conclude, remind you that I have endeavoured to learn and teach God's mind about the future coming and kingdom and glory of the Lord Jesus. In the quiet of this chamber of affliction I am only confirmed in the truth of what I believe. I have by Scripture authority preached to you of that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Oh, that we were all more affected graciously and practically by this blessed hope, and that the inspired description given of the members of the early Church might more thoroughly fit us: 'Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and the true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven,

whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come' (1 Thess. i. 10), and to stand in that posture of readiness to which the Lord exhorts, not being in darkness that that day should overtake us like a thief, but having our loins girded about, and our lights burning, and thus like unto men that wait for their Lord.

"I must, however, rein up my pen, so willing when it is used for the good of those I have so long loved in the Gospel of grace, and for whose souls I have desired to watch as one that must give account.

"In conclusion, I wish to express the pain it gives me to have no prospect, at least for some months to come, of having the privilege of preaching to you the precious Word of God, and the earnest desire and hope I have that during my affliction you will feel it incumbent on you not to scatter abroad, but to be very strict and constant in the assembling of yourselves together for the worship of God, the celebration of the Saviour's dying love, and the hearing of His holy Word, and, all who can do so, for the instruction of the young. I am thankful to be able to tell you that God is inclining His servants to come to you to preach His truth, so that there is every prospect of a certain sound issuing from the pulpit from week to week. And oh, that it may prove that these are months when the Word shall be abundantly applied by the Holy Ghost to the quickening the dead, the leading

burdened sinners to Christ, the confirmation, instruction, assurance, direction, and watering the souls of believers, to the restoration of wanderers, and thus to the honour and glory of the Holy Trinity in unity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen and amen. Brethren, it helps me much that you remember me in prayer. Go on to do so; and if it be the Lord's heavenly will, may I be restored to you to show myself amongst you what I have so long been, though deeply unworthy of such a post, thankful to have the privilege of signing myself your willing, loving servant in the glorious Gospel of covenant grace."

The above address was read to the church at Clifton, on the 2nd of September. In October Mr. Sears returned home, somewhat benefited by the change, but in November, by medical advice, returned to spend a few more weeks at Brighton. An old and attached friend of his, after relating many pleasant reminiscences of their past affectionate and spiritual acquaintance, says: "I saw him the last time he passed through London to go to Brighton. He sent me a post card, and asked me to call at Mr. Brown's, where he stayed for a night, on which he said it would be nice to shake hands with me once more. When I got there I found him very tired and weak after his journey. He asked me to assist him in going to bed, which I did. He leaned on my arm from the

sitting room to the bed room, and I helped him to undress and got him comfortably to bed. His conversation was in heaven, for he was spiritually minded, which is life and peace. He said, 'The Lord is good, and my meditation of Him is sweet. The most of my time is spent at the cross, I see such imperfection in everything that I have done and said, but at the same time I see such infinite perfection in everything that the Lord of life and glory did and said, and I have the blessed Spirit bearing witness with my spirit that what He did was accomplished for me, and that His whole work is imputed to me, and, therefore, in Him I stand complete.'" His health again improved, and he began to hope that he might yet be privileged to publish the glad tidings of salvation as he had been wont to do on the walls of Zion. But all these hopes were cut short by the somewhat sudden stroke of death.

We have no wish to import into this account of our departed friend anything of creature laudation, but would rather that his godly life and disinterested labours in the Church of Christ should bear their own testimony: and, we feel sure, if our departed friend could speak to us on this subject, he would desire we should only do as the churches of Judæa, of whom Paul says (Gal. i. 24), "And they glorified God in me."

During his stay in Brighton several friends had repeated opportunities of seeing and conversing with him, as his strength would allow, on the

things of God. They felt there was a sweet savour and power accompanying his words at these times, which caused them to sink deep into their hearts.

We here give a few things respecting his state of mind and spiritual frame, as gathered by friends who were favoured occasionally to converse with him, during the last few weeks of his life. To them his company was pleasant and his conversation profitable, since, as before stated, it savoured so blessedly of the grace and spirit of his divine Lord and Master.

His sincere and attached friend, Dr. Corfe, writes:—

"Soon after his arrival in Brighton, in September last, I found him sitting up in bed, and attempting to write on a portion in the book of Numbers which had been very sweet to his soul that morning. His distress and restlessness from a renewed attack of difficulty of breathing during the past night was so urgent, that I forbade him to talk beyond giving me answers to a few leading questions, but he broke out thus: 'Oh, I must tell you the sweet view I had early this morning, when I cried out, "Lord, increase my faith, and give me a strong hold of Thee!" and the comforting assurance came with it, "However weak your faith, yet the Rock on which that faith is built can support a giant as well as a babe in faith." Oh, what comfort this gave me, not only that my weak

faith was as a *babe*, but that it was genuine, and that it rested on nothing less than on the eternal Rock of Ages.'

"On another occasion, in reply to my remark that I had just been making my observations on 'the halt, the lame, and the blind' in this town, he replied with much warmth and cheerfulness, 'How singular you should mention this circumstance, whilst I have been so instructed in the reading of this sixth of Micah.' He then quoted from the Bible as it lay open on his knees in bed, 'The Lord's controversy with His people, and His pleading with Israel;' and then, alluding to the thirteenth verse, he said, 'I will make thee sick in smiting thee. This is *no sickness of body*, no affliction of a mortal nature. No. This is a sickness of soul, constraining the smitten one to say with the poet—

"'Weary of earth, myself, and sin!'

"Sick at heart for the transgressions one is deeply sensible of, and yet so smitten as to flee to the Rock for shelter, and to hide one's sin-sick soul under the droppings of that precious blood which flowed from the Victim on Calvary's bloody and accursed tree. I feel I am that smitten one, and yet every stroke of the Smiter is a stroke of expressed love and of tender mercy.'

"Much more would have fallen from him, but frail nature was again giving way, and I begged

him to enjoy his sweet morsel alone with his only and best-beloved Lord and Master. This conversation was so savoured with divine power and unction, that he seemed like a fair bird of paradise pluming its feathers and just getting ready to take its flight to that happy land where sorrow and sighing are for ever done away."

Then Mr. Harbour, minister of West Street Chapel, Brighton, writes as follows :—

"*19th October*, 1877.

"I visited Mr. Sears. He said: 'I have been reading the words of Solomon, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold of her."' Then he added, '*There is a laying hold*—faith receiving the Lord Jesus. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." A living faith takes hold of Christ and feeds upon Him.' What he desired was to enjoy Christ in his own soul's experience, and he wished it for others. I thought he seemed remarkably subdued, and, while referring to fiery trials he had had, and was then passing through, he manifested a chastened spirit, and no bitterness towards those who opposed him. When I left him, I could not help feeling that his soul was in a very blessed state.

"On the evening of December 7th a heavy rain detained us in the chapel after the prayer meeting.

Mr. Sears was one. This was the Lord's *let*, as it gave us an opportunity of conversing. Mr. Sears was the chief speaker, and gave us some very encouraging and weighty thoughts from Genesis iii. 15. He spoke of full and complete redemption by the Lord Jesus—of the blessedness of a fixed faith upon Him—but said in his own experience he was oft so unbelieving, and had such fears and conflict. He felt we wanted more than faith to live upon. There was such a proneness in us to live upon impressions. He referred to Mr. Vinall, sen., of blessed memory, and with what power he had heard him; how clearly he used to show the sinner the path of life, and its windings, leading the soul to rest.

"When I called on December 20th to inform him of the death of our friend Mr. Lucas, he rejoiced to hear that he was gone to enjoy the rest prepared for him, and so entered into the enjoyment of heaven as if he himself was on the borders of it; and then he told me how he had enjoyed reading 'Fragments,' &c., written by Mr. Lucas. It was such good experience, like Huntington's, and men of the same stamp. He asked me if I could gather anything for him to write a short obituary of Mr. Lucas, in which he would like to notice his book. He had not reviewed it, as he deemed it for private circulation. How little did I think, when he made this request, that so shortly some one would write *his* obituary.

"On the 21st I saw him in the evening. His cough was so troublesome that we could not converse. This was our last meeting on this side of Jordan; and, in reviewing my few visits to Mr. Sears, I can say his conversation was with grace, seasoned with salt."

Another friend gives a relation of some precious things spoken by Mr. Sears, at a meeting held in the house of a Christian friend, shortly before Mr. Sears' death, where he delivered his last and dying testimony.

The meeting here described was said by all to be most solemn, and was viewed as a dying testimony of the faithfulness of God to His revered servant and minister in the hour of approaching death.

A friend one day asked Mr. Sears if he thought he could meet a few Christians and speak in his drawing room, to which he heartily replied, "Yes, he should exceedingly like to meet a few of the Lord's people." Accordingly an arrangement was made. On the morning of the same day, Mr. Sears unexpectedly saw an old friend from America, whom he personally invited to the evening meeting, saying, "I should like you to come." This coincidence was a marvellous link in the chain of God's providence whereby that far-off land should hear the dying testimony of this dear and valued man of God, who never spoke again in public, and was not permitted to leave any other

testimony before he received the summons, "Come up higher." Truly may it be said of him, "He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me."

After singing a hymn, prayer was offered up by a friend, then Mr. Sears requested that the twenty-seventh Psalm might be read; but, before speaking upon it, he expressed his grateful thanks to his kind friend for giving him the opportunity of speaking to a few (as he trusted) of the Lord's people, for he felt he had something to say, and he had desired it might be the Lord's will he should deliver it, and that was, his own experience of the all-sustaining power of the grace of God when "passing through the valley of the shadow of death," as he called his illness in August last. He said he had often had gloomy forebodings as to how it would be with him at last, but the Lord took away all his fears, and vouchsafed a precious opening of this psalm, hence his reason for selecting it that evening. He distinctly remembered, when he thought himself in the arms of death, what a stronghold and unspeakable comfort were the words, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life [yes, even at such a time]; of whom shall I be afraid?" He said he knew he had always a weak faith, but he had a strong object

—a strong Christ—and had truly realised the words, "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock." Here he said some very precious things about being hid in the pavilion, and of his calm and peaceful assurance of safety through the blood of the Lamb. Indeed he could say, "O death, where is thy sting?"

The last time Mr. Sears went out was on the 25th of December, when he felt as well as he had been for some time previously, and enjoyed a walk by the sea. In the evening he conversed upon spiritual things with much cheerfulness; but on retiring to rest he evidenced unmistakable symptoms of great exhaustion. About two o'clock he awoke, being seized with a chill, feeling very uneasy, and finding great difficulty in breathing. Immediately the medicine prescribed by Dr. Corfe was administered, which was to be taken at any time when symptoms were perceived of the state of the heart being worse than usual. After he had taken it he begged that the person of the house might be called up, which request intimated what his feelings were. As hastily as possible this was done, and upon entering the room again Mrs. Sears perceived he was fast sinking. She had only just strength to support his head till the servant came in, into whose arms she was compelled to give him up. His dear wife's devoted attention sought everything

that could be obtained to relieve him, but all efforts failed. His breathing was so quiet that it was hardly known when he ceased to breathe; and thus, on the morning of December 26th, 1877, at the age of fifty-eight, this faithful standard-bearer, after many years of active service and abundant labours, was called by his beloved Lord and Master to—

"Quit the gory field of battle
For a kingdom and a crown."

THE FUNERAL.

THE following report of Mr. Sears' funeral is from the *Hertfordshire Express*. While it tends to show the great esteem in which he was held in his own neighbourhood, it may also be of some interest to many sympathising friends who could not be present:—

"On the 26th ultimo, Mr. Septimus Sears, pastor of the congregation of Particular Baptists, Clifton, died at Brighton, from heart disease, in the fifty-eighth year of his age. Mr. Sears (who, it may here be mentioned, had a great objection to the title 'Reverend' being prefixed to his name) had laboured as a minister in Clifton some thirty-five years. When he came to the village the Particular Baptists had no regular place for public worship there, and for some time he conducted the service in a temporary building. He exerted himself, and with great success, in getting a suitable chapel for his congregation to worship in, and in 1853 the present chapel, a handsome and commodious building, was erected. Mr. Sears was unwearied in the discharge of the duties pertaining to the office and

work of a minister, and he had his reward in the love of a devoted people. During the long period of his ministry the utmost harmony and good feeling existed between him and the members of his flock. Though Mr. Sears was one who might indeed say, 'I dwell among mine own people,' yet he was widely known and esteemed, and his efforts to leave the world better than he found it, though mainly employed for the benefit of those placed under his care, were not confined to any one neighbourhood. With both tongue and pen he took an active part in promoting every good work. He was, up to the time of his death, editor of a monthly publication entitled the *Little Gleaner*, which has had a wide circulation, being admirably suited for all sorts and conditions of young people. His death, at an age when he might naturally have expected to live for some years to employ his many talents in the service of his Master, has been a severe blow to his congregation. It may be safely said that there never was a pastor more warmly loved by his flock, or one who by his godly life and earnest work better deserved the good wishes of his people.

"Shortly after his death his body was brought from Brighton to Clifton, and on Tuesday afternoon the funeral took place. Soon after three o'clock the coffin was carried from Mr. Sears' late dwelling place into the chapel, and placed near the pulpit. The chapel, which can accommodate about seven

hundred, was crowded in every part, and many people who wished to enter had to stop outside, as the building was unable to hold the multitude who sought admission. The pulpit, which had for so long been occupied by Mr. Sears, and some other parts of the inside of the edifice, were draped in black, and this, combined with the dulness of a dark and cheerless January evening, cast what some would perhaps call an appropriate gloom over the interior of the chapel. Divine service was begun by the singing of the hymn, number 728 in the Clifton Selection, 'Favoured soul, thy ship's at shore,' written, it is said, by Mr. Sears himself. After this, Mr. Thomas Hull, Baptist minister, Hastings, read some portions of Scripture, beginning with the passage in John's gospel, xi. 14—27; the last verses of 1 Thess. iv. were next read, and finally the latter part of 1 Cor. xv.

"Mr. Hull then delivered a short address. They had met, he said, on the first day of the new year under very solemn and very sorrowful circumstances. Death was always a solemn thing. It was a solemn thing for a child of God to die, and to exchange time for eternity; and how awfully solemn was the death of those who had not known God, who had no interest in the blood and merits of Him who conquered death! But however solemn it might be for a child of God to exchange worlds, to pass from time to eternity, might not each of them say, 'Let me die the death of the righteous,

and let my last end be like his'? When the sinner thought of death, did he also think of what was to come after it? 'It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment.'

"Mr. Hull having dwelt for a while on the mercy of being prepared to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and having earnestly spoken of faith in Him who could sustain and comfort them in the valley of the shadow of death, went on to speak of the kindly relations which had so long existed between the pastor and the congregation of that church. What a comfort it was, he said, to them in their bereavement to know that he who had for so many years ministered to them in word and doctrine had finished his course with joy, and had gone to receive the crown of righteousness which was laid up, not for him only, but for all them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. All of them would feel that in the death of Mr. Sears they had lost a friend. He was a man of genial disposition and large heart; full of sympathy for men that loved God and prized Christ; and he was a lover of good men. On that day they all felt the loss they had sustained, and that loss would be felt more fully some time hence. The death of Mr. Sears was as the falling of a standard-bearer in the day of battle. God had taken him away from all his labours and all his usefulness, and they would see him no more in the flesh.

They all knew how arduously he worked to promote their welfare, and how diligently and unceasingly he laboured for their souls' profit. Theirs had, so to speak, been a maiden love. Mr. Sears had been their first pastor, and they had grown up together. Minister and people had dwelt together in love, in unity, and in peace. There had been no strife, no division, among them; all had been harmony and love. He had gone to his rest, and left a united people behind him; he had gone to the abode of the blessed, and left his church in peace; he had gone to the Lord, and had left his people abiding in truth and love. While they missed him from the pulpit they would still think of him, and his memory would not soon be effaced. As a congregation they had much to be thankful for, seeing that God had preserved him to them so long, and had now taken him in peace to Himself, while they were at peace among themselves. And however it might be with others, it could not be said of them, neither would their lives be embittered by the painful reflection, that they had broken their loving pastor's heart.

"Mr. Hull next spoke of the difficulties the congregation would have to meet in getting a successor to Mr. Sears, and gave them some good advice on this subject, praying that God might send them a suitable pastor, that minister and people might be bound together in love, and that the Lord might abundantly bless them.

"Having spoken a few words touching the sorrow of the bereaved widow, Mr. Hull concluded an earnest address by praying that to all of them God might make that dispensation a blessing.

"While Mr. Hull was speaking, nearly every person in the chapel was visibly affected, and many wept unrestrainedly. It could indeed be easily seen by the demeanour of the congregation how much Mr. Sears had been beloved by those among whom he had laboured during the best part of his life, and how deeply they felt the great loss that had befallen them in his death. Before the coffin was borne from the chapel, a portion of the hymn, number 728, 'Jesus, while our hearts are bleeding,' was sung, and a short prayer was then offered up by Mr. Hull. The coffin having been carried to a vault in the chapel yard (in which the remains of Mr. Sears' father and mother are deposited), a few verses of the 729th hymn were sung. In consigning the body to the tomb, Mr. Hull said a few words concerning the labours of Mr. Sears in Clifton, as evidencing him to be a most disinterested and faithful friend, and earnestly exhorted his hearers to follow the example set them in the godly life of their late pastor.

"The attendance at the funeral was, as before remarked, very large, and many came from a considerable distance to be present at the ceremony.

"'Twas gain to die, to him whose only hope
The Rock of everlasting ages bore;
He saw the goodly land, from Pisgah's top,
Where sin and death are felt and feared no more."

Kent.

A tablet has been fixed in the chapel at Clifton where he so long and successfully laboured in word and doctrine, bearing the following inscription :—

In Loving Remembrance of

SEPTIMUS SEARS,

Who, as the first and highly-esteemed pastor of this church, faithfully and successfully preached the gospel of Christ here for thirty-five years. He also laboured much for the church of Christ at large, and especially for the young both in this country and in other parts of the world, being the originator of the periodicals known as the *Little Gleaner* and the *Sower*, and their Editor until his death.

He was the means of erecting four almshouses in this village for aged members of this church or congregation; but it is in the hearts of those who were led to Christ through his instrumentality that a more lasting monument is to be found. By the grace of God he was what he was, as his manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, and patience in afflictions and trials truly testified.

He fell asleep in Jesus December 26th, 1877,
Aged 58.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them" (Rev. xiv. 13).

This tablet is erected by his sorrowing church
and congregation.

LETTERS.

To Miss Crosby.

Clifton, near Shefford, March 16, 1858.

My dear Young Friend,—It is difficult to say anything fresh to one who is constantly hearing my voice from week to week. I do not say this to lead you to regret writing to me; I am glad you have done so; but I fear you will be disappointed in my reply. I have long thought, from little things I have seen, that you were really seeking the Lord, and all your fears do not shake my hope that God has begun a good work in your soul. Such tests of the reality of soul trouble as you mention are very unwise, because nowhere mentioned in Scripture. You may not have had deep soul trouble, but it is not depth but reality that is everything. Yours, my dear friend, is right soul trouble if it takes you in sincerity of soul to the Lord Jesus, longing to be washed in His blood, saved by His grace, delivered from the power of every sin, and brought to enjoy and serve Him. You know not what you

crave when you desire a deep law work. Cast yourself down at the feet of Jesus, entreating Him to make you right and save your soul in His own way. You do not read such prayers in the Bible as your desires for deep soul trouble might suggest. When you pray for sincerity, to be drawn to Christ, for mercy, for pardon, for grace, for love, &c., you pray Scripturally. Go on seeking and pleading, and the Lord will turn and have compassion, He will subdue your iniquities, and cast your sins into the depths of the sea. Read the hymn, beginning, "Ye lambs of Christ's fold," and you will there read what expresses my feelings towards you, and advice to you.

Yours sincerely,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. C. Lenton.

Brighton, May 8, 1858.

My dear Brother in the Fight and Faith of a Christian,—I am seated this morning to write you a few lines, hoping you will receive them on Sunday morning. I trust by this time your foot is ceasing to give you so much pain, and that the affliction has yielded the peaceable fruits of righteousness to you. How much we need weaning from the perishing things of this poor dying world! How continually we need telling this is not our rest, it is polluted! It is indeed a polluted land through which we are passing, and the pollutions around us are only the development of pollutions we have within us. What a mercy that our inward pollution has ever been made our plague, so that having the sentence of death

in ourselves we should not trust in ourselves, but in Him that raiseth the dead! Favoured are those who, out of this eater, bring forth such meat as makes them understand Hart's striking verse—

> "Corruptions make the mourners shun
> Presumption's dangerous snare;
> Force us to trust to Christ alone,
> And fly to God by prayer."

What needful things we find the open fountain, the finished robe, and the fulness of grace; and equally needful the mighty ministry of the Eternal Spirit to take these things and show them unto us. You can well imagine how our time has been occupied here. We heard a Mr. Jones, who preaches the truth, on Tuesday morning, and Mr. Kershaw in the evening; also Mr. Kershaw on Wednesday evening, and Mr. Vinall on Thursday evening. We liked Mr. Vinall much. He is a man of God indeed. I spoke myself at Mr. Grace's last evening. I trust you have been kept low and prayerful, and looking unto Jesus since we parted. Will you tell the dear people in the chapel that I send my love to them, and that they have a near place in my heart and petitions. Ask them to pray for me. I trust they will not have to regret a prayer meeting for one Lord's Day. May the Lord bless you, and keep you, and make His face to shine upon you, and give you peace. Give our love to Mrs. Lenton.

Yours affectionately,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. C. Lenton.

90, *Rue de Boston, Boulogne-sur-Mer,*
June 15, 1860.

My Dear Brother,—Feeling sure of your interest in all that concerns me, and having a short time alone this evening, I shall occupy (D.V.) a few minutes in writing to you. We arrived here safely on Tuesday evening, after a rather rough passage, and were soon warmly embraced by our French friends, who seemed overjoyed to see us. We went to Monsieur Doumin's at once. When I told him of the great kindness of the dear people at Clifton, and put down their 250 francs with 25 francs from a friend in London, he was quite overcome, and we were soon prostrate together before God to offer up thanksgiving in the name of Jesus. I trust I find the work of grace much advanced in the souls of the brethren here. We had a sweet meeting on Wednesday evening. The subject was Rom. v. Last evening we went to hear the new minister in the Chapelle Evangélique, but all seemed without power. I feel more than ever convinced that Doumin is right in continuing his course. I am going this evening to the meeting to make my first effort to expound in French. As the meeting is to be upon the subject of baptism I hope to read the eighth of Acts. I find all the more comfort in the society of M. Doumin for having more French at command. How painful to witness the death that reigns on all hands here! *Popery, infidelity, levity, profanity,* and a formal Protestantism in a few—these words give a general idea of the state of things. How thankful should we be for our great privileges! May they be long continued to us. You will be

glad to hear that already the change has been much blessed to my dear wife, and I am myself feeling it very refreshing. You will receive this, I hope on Lord's Day morning. Please give our love to all the dear flock at the chapel, and especially to Mr. Fraser; also accept the same for yourself and Mrs. Lenton. I wish you may be able, when you read the word on the Lord's Day after, to give its meaning in a few simple words, and that you and Mr. Haddow may be enabled so to conduct the meeting that it may not be complained of as being tedious. I fear you will find this letter a mere sheetful of news. May the Lord bless you with much of His gracious presence, which is better than life, and help you to live upon Jesus's death, is the sincere desire of,

Yours affectionately,

S. SEARS.

The following letter was written from France to the Church and congregation at Clifton.

MY DEAR PEOPLE, to whom it has pleased the Lord to lead me to preach the Word of life, you have a very large place in my affections, and often are my thoughts wafted across sea and land to you collectively and individually, and, what is of far more importance, my desires for your souls' welfare are often wafted to the Eternal Throne. What a mercy is a mercy-seat, the blood-sprinkled meeting place of the saints, wherever they may be cast by the providence of God. If we get nearness to the throne of grace we cannot be far distant from each other. This nearness is a blessing I earnestly

wish both for myself and all saints, especially for the saints meeting at Clifton Chapel. This nearness in peace by the shed blood, with boldness by faith in the promise, and with warm affections through the Spirit of adoption, is one of the greatest blessings on this side the land that flows with milk and honey. O seek it, dear friends, perseveringly seek it. I know it is a blessing that many of you are earnestly seeking. Oh, the evils that come to the Christian in a state of distance from the mercy throne! This is the hour of advantage to Satan. That wolf rends the strayed sheep, but slinks away from the presence of the Good Shepherd. O that we may in sweet enjoyment lie in His bosom, and in active service be led by His gracious hand!

"I would be near His feet,
Or at His wounded side;
Feel how His heart doth beat,
And view the purple tide;
Trace all the wonders of His death,
And sing His love in every breath."

A time of distance from the throne of grace is the time for our garden of graces to droop, and our weeds of corruption to flourish. The most prayerful is always the most fruitful Christian. With our backs upon the throne we are like the earth turning from the sun. Then the beasts of prey prowl forth and seek to do deeds of blood. Then the birds of paradise fold their wings and are mute. Oh, if we do really want sin to be weakened in us, and grace to be strengthened in us, let us seek more earnestly to live in prayer. When we wander from the mercy seat then is the time that this poor world grievously engrosses us; then it is that we are ready mournfully to say—

"Hardly sure can they be worse,
Who have never heard His name."

Leaving the mercy seat is the needy one leaving the fulness that alone can supply him; the helpless one ceasing to lean on the only arm that can hold him up; the sick one leaving the physician; the sheep leaving his green pastures; the parched one leaving the fountain of living waters; the famishing one leaving the well-spread table; the child leaving his father's roof; the bride leaving the bridegroom's company; the traveller leaving his guide.

Oh! leaving the throne is "forsaking our own mercies." I know your helplessness, for I feel my own; but I know also my idleness. I feel quite sure, and want to learn experimentally, that the diligent soul shall be made fat; but, alas! I know too well, the idle soul shall suffer hunger. My dear friends, the life of religion is living prayer. It is spiritual respiration, it is indeed the heaving and breathing of the spiritual lungs. Lord, make me and my dear people wise enough to leave off speculating, and begin in earnest praying.

"The feeblest prayer, if faith be there,
Exceeds all empty notion."

While others quarrel and split hairs, may we be led to take the martyr's advice—"Pray, pray, pray;" or what is better, may the Gospel precept be ours practically, "Pray without ceasing." But who is sufficient for these things? What can weakness do? Nothing; no, nothing right without the gracious teaching of the Holy Spirit. I believe those make a serious mistake who think they are not to try to pray until they are sure they are led by the Holy Spirit. I believe we are to wait

upon the Holy Spirit, as well as wait for the Holy Spirit. O may you be enabled at all times to go, whatever you may have to groan about, and cast yourself in all your nakedness, pollution, and poverty, at the foot of that throne where mercy is to be found, and grace to help in time of need is given; and may you never forget your poor, and needy, and unworthy servant in the Gospel. In this land of superstition and darkness I often think of our home mercies. It is awful to see here open bowing down to senseless images, and to know that the people are by thousands confiding their souls to the care of creatures as dependent as themselves; and it is sad to find no Gospel preached in English, nor even any little gathering of spiritual people to worship God. Two poor Frenchmen preach, I hope, the Gospel of sovereign grace; but, out of many thousands of their countrymen here, not thirty will hear them, both put together. I have found one Frenchman and one English woman with whom I can have communion, and that is all at present. I long to proclaim a full salvation to the masses here, but know I must now rest. O that all of you who know the Lord could make it a matter of conscience to let nothing but the most lawful hindrances keep you from your place every time the chapel doors are open. We know not how long we may have the light of these privileges, and while we have the light let us walk in the light.

I have had the manifest people of God in view in this letter, but I do not forget others. Some will hear this letter who know nothing of crying from their hearts for mercy through sin-atoning blood. Oh, my dear friends, may the Lord in great mercy open your eyes, and lead you to Him who will never turn a deaf ear

to the cry of a supplicant whose only plea is the promise sealed with blood. I rejoice much to hope that several young people have their faces turned Zionward. I often am thinking of you, my dear seeking friends, and anticipate the glad voice of thanksgiving that I hope soon to hear from some of you. Seek, dear friends, seek and wait; plead the promises, throw your perishing souls at the foot of the cross, and there condemnation can never reach you. You will all be glad to learn that I quite hope to return to you with my health and strength greatly increased, though at present I am still suffering with my arm and neck, but a little amendment makes me trust it is beginning to get well. May the Lord greatly bless my visit. Everything in nature here is lovely, but nothing outward can be a substitute for communion with the saints, and the preaching of the precious Gospel of Christ. I must now say adieu. God bless you all, is the sincere desire of,—Yours affectionately,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. C. Lenton.

Red Bank, Manchester, Dec. 16, 1863.

My Dear Brother,—I trust I have found much liberty in speaking the Word here, and have reason to believe the joyful sound has found an echo in many hearts. The six sermons are to be taken down and printed, if the Lord will, so that I am very anxious to be led to preach upon subjects of most need in the churches. Pray for me. I believe it is good that I should seek to minister at times from home, or I would much prefer being kept

with the dear flock at Clifton. May we still more and more love each other in the Lord Jesus. I trust I can say that time, which often enfeebles attachments that are earthly, only strengthens my affection to you and the saints at Clifton Chapel. Let them know, when it is given out, that I hope to meet them on the 25th, and that I desire to be remembered affectionately to them and prayerfully by them. We join in love to you and dear Mrs. Lenton. And now, dear brother, to Jesu's loving heart, bleeding side, guiding eye, and Almighty arm, I commend you, remaining,—Yours in gospel affection,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. C. Lenton.

Saturday, October, 1864.

My dear Friend and Brother,—May the everlasting peace of God be with you, setting you sweetly free in your conscience to serve the Lord Jesus. Amen. I am just pencilling you a line to tell you the Lord has mercifully brought us here in the midst of kind friends, and gives me the hope I shall be enabled to use my voice to-morrow to exalt the dear Lamb of God. I found my voice worse yesterday, but a mustard plaister last night was a means of allaying this extra inflammation. Praise the Lord for His mercy, and pray for me that I may be restored to the dear saints at Clifton Chapel in soul health, and in strength to minister His truth. I know you do pray for me, and that the Lord has graciously answered your prayers in measure. I try to pray for you and dear Mrs. Lenton, and all the dear friends. Give

my sincere Christian love to them. Will you give our love to my dear father. I have thought much about him since I have been here. I hope he will still be spared to us, and be fruitful in his soul. What cause I have to be thankful about him! My wife desires her love. She is finding the change beneficial to her health. We find we shall not be able to reach home before Friday. I feel a desire to see you, and greet you once more in the name of the Lord. May we meet in the Spirit. May our communion be gracious. May we be a lasting blessing to each other. I know you will say Amen to this desire of

Yours in much affection,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. C. Lenton.

Brighton, December 16, 1864.

My very dear Brother,—Through God's great mercy I am here in safety, and have been preserved from taking cold, and although the weather is rather severe I am finding the change very bracing. My head is remarkably better, and I quite hope to return in good health, for me. What encouragement for you and the Lord's dear people that have had poured upon them a spirit of prayer for me! Go on, dear brother, to pray for me, that I may be "spiritually minded," and be an "enabled minister of the New Testament." I hope to have strength to preach twice on Lord's day, and a reporter is engaged to take down the two sermons. May the Lord clothe them with power. Will you give my love to dear Mr. Fraser? I trust you will have together

"a feast and a good day." Help me to praise the Lord that I have received a sweet letter from ——— showing his contrition, and his longing desire to manifest the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus. I find that ——— is still taking high ground—join me in prayer that the Lord will

"Order his footsteps in His Word,"

and

"Renew a right spirit within him."

Brighton brings you vividly before my mind. I trust we had some sweet fellowship here on Dr. Owen's precious volume, and hope, if the Lord spares us, we may yet be so privileged again. I feel I am far from what I want to be; but Jesus, dear Jesus, is all I would have Him to be. I can spare nothing from Him, and would have nothing added to Him. O may the blessed Spirit testify of Him to our souls! He is a sea that can never be crossed, fathomed, measured, or lessened. O may we be led to use Him by faith before God as a plea, before the Church and the world as a spring of grace and a subject of testimony. Please give my love to our dear brother Haddow, and also to my father, to Mrs. Lenton, and to all the friends with whom you may meet. And now, dear friend, "I commend you to God and the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified, through faith that is in Christ;" and remain,—Yours very affectionately, for the truth's sake that is in you,

S. SEARS.

TO MR. C. LENTON.

Wilford, Nottingham, July 10, 1871.

MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,—Many thanks for the prompt sending the remaining half note. I trust it may please the Lord to allow me to see you next week about Wednesday. The day of my travelling must be left to the doctor's advice. I am by God's mercy recovering, although the nerves are greatly shaken, and the muscles much stiffened by struggling, &c.* The Lord has enabled me to walk a little in the garden, both yesterday and to-day. Yesterday I had a sweet sip in this way: I reached out, by God's mercy, towards Jesus, and received Him afresh before God as the Father's gift, and immediately I felt it so sweet to believe that those who accept Christ, the Father accepts in Christ. This has been a very merciful affliction. I believe when God brings you upon the bed of languishing, He will strengthen you according to His word. I hope you will soon hear of some improvement in dear S——. Give our love to Mrs. Lenton and S—— when you write. Give our warm love to all the dear people of God. I feel pleasure in the prospect of soon seeing them again (D.V.). How very kind of you to be willing even to come this distance to minister to me. I had it quite in my mind, if the operation had to be performed, to ask, if I had been spared through it, that I might see your face here, if only for a few hours; but now I hope I shall soon come to you by the will of God. I felt, when I thought

* This was during an internal displacement similar to that which proved fatal in the case of the late Mr. Covell. Mr. Sears recovered, and that without the anticipated operation being performed.

I might see you no more in the flesh, I could only commit you, with all the dear people of God at Clifton Chapel, to Jesus. When the doctors came and laid down their instruments, that word was sweet to me, "Lord, into Thy hands I commit my spirit." I find writing rather trying, so that I hope you will excuse my writing with a pencil, and only enough to express to you our warm love in the Gospel of Jesus.

Yours in much affection,

S. SEARS.

Still pray for me. "I am poor and needy, but the Lord thinketh upon me." The kindness of these dear people is unbounded. I have everything that I need, and that money or thought can procure.

TO MR. C. LENTON.

Wilford, July 13, 1871.

MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,—I have been gladdened this morning by seeing your handwriting. I was glad to get the message from dear Mrs. Lenton, but was disappointed to get no news about S——. I am so wanting to hear that God is blessing the change to her. I am sure you will be glad to know that by the goodness of God I am still progressing. I find the whole thing has much shaken my already enfeebled nerves. The Lord was very gracious to bring the affliction where I could have such abundant mercies. I look back now with wonder and gratitude at the amazing mercy of God to me in giving me such a measure of calm resting upon the

atoning blood at such a time. One of the doctors has since told me he wondered at my calm under circumstances wherein the bulk are in such terror. I told him my calm was like that of the harlot Rahab when she heard the blast of the rams' horns; she could calmly look at the scarlet line, the token of her security, and I was favoured by the Holy Spirit to look to the blood of Jesus. Pray for me (I know you do), that my spared life may be the Lord's. I much anticipate the joy of again meeting you and all the Lord's dear people at Clifton, if God should spare me to next Wednesday. O that we may all be lovers one of another with a pure heart fervently. May the Lord make this instance of His fatherly displeasure and at the same time fatherly love a great blessing. What a comfort to feel persuaded that the two that are gone, are gone to glory! I hope you found it solemn and good for your soul to go to the grave of Ann Chambers. When you write give our love to Mrs. Lenton and S——. Give my love to all the dear friends, as well as those you have named; I fear to name any because I cannot name all. I am going to be drawn out this morning; the air is very useful to me. Give my love to W—— and E——. O that they were each under the shelter of the cross, that shelter so safe, and alone safe, for life, death, and eternity! Accept our united warm Christian love.

Yours in much affection,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. C. Lenton.

Wilford, Saturday, July 15, 1871.

My very dear Brother,—Many thanks for your kind letter just received. I was so sorry to find no better account of dear S——. May the Lord sanctify the lengthening out of the trial. He is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind. I thank you much for your kind thought about the conveyance best for me to be met by. I hope I shall still be better, by the Lord's mercy. I think nothing would be better than my little pony chaise. I hope after I arrive it will not be long before I have the privilege of seeing you. I am glad to say the Lord gave me the privilege of speaking a little in His name last evening; but I was sadly weak and unwell in the night after it. I hope to be helped to speak a little to-morrow. By another Lord's day I trust my strength will have much returned. May the Lord hear and answer your prayers both for yourself and for me. God has been most merciful to me. O that I may not fall after it as Hezekiah did. You and the dear people at Clifton Chapel are much on my mind. O that we may be made a very united, loving, fruitful people! Give my love to all who inquire after me. Mr. Farrer I know you will speak to. I have each time wanted to name him, but I have feared to name any one especially, wishing to have all the dear ransomed ones in my heart equally. If the Lord spare us to Wednesday evening may we have the pleasure, with gratitude of heart, to meet. Love to the dear children, and to Mrs. Lenton, and S—— when you write.

Yours very affectionately,

S. SEARS.

TO THE CHURCH.

MY DEAR, KIND FRIENDS,—You have laid me under new obligations to you in giving me a new proof of your affectionate care for me. Your gift, which is so very bountiful, I prize chiefly because it is a fruit of love. I felt in receiving it very unworthy of the love of the Lord's people, and yet nothing would hurt me more than not to have your affection. God has been bounty, mercy, and kindness itself towards me, a poor vile sinner; and next to my own salvation I prize His mercy in having made me a means of blessing to your souls. O that the fervent prayers that have been presented at the mercy seat this week may be abundantly answered ere the present year has rolled away. Will you all accept my sincere love, thanks, and best wishes. And O may the Lord go on to add from the congregation to the church, such as shall be saved! May the Lord's servants in my absence receive divine aid, and be made a great blessing. I know you have prayed for me; I entreat you go on to do so. May the word of the Lord "have free course and be glorified"; and should the Lord spare me may I be brought safely home to you on Monday, the 22nd, and be favoured to meet you on Tuesday evening, the 23rd. Accept my love and thanks, and believe me, your willing though poor and unworthy pastor,

SEPTIMUS SEARS.

To Mr. C. Lenton.

Wilford, Nottingham, July 12, 1872.

My very dear Brother in the one hope of our calling,—May grace, mercy and peace be multiplied to you. Ever since I have been here I have been planning to write you a line, but have been let hitherto, excepting a word on a card. I trust you, dear Mrs. Lenton, and all your household are well. Please all accept our united love. By the great mercy of God I have been enabled to blow the silver trumpet of the gospel here. Last Lord's Day morning I particularly experienced "*not sufficient of ourselves*," and in the evening "*our sufficiency is of God.*" I trust you received some gracious communication through Mr. M——, and that in your meetings for prayer you are finding the Saviour true to His word, "Where two or three," &c. I have felt it solemn and sweet at times to be in the very room where the Lord sustained me and wrought such gracious deliverance for me last year. The family are very kind. Some dear aged people of God here seem very ripe for the sickle. One shock of corn has been gathered since I have been here. Another, at eighty years of age, told me her great need was patience, until she should be harvested. I hope to speak a short time this evening. I still have a cold. Excuse a barren scrap of a note. If spared to Monday, the 22nd, I hope to see you again by the good hand of God upon me.

Believe me, yours in much affection,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. C. Lenton.

Bath, May 13, 1873.

My dear Friend and Brother,—I am ashamed of my silence after having spoken of my intention to write to you. I hope you will not think the saying applicable in this case, "out of sight out of mind." You and the dear people of God at Clifton are much in my thoughts. May the Lord answer my feeble prayers for you all, and make me more fervent in prayer for you. I trust you have found some blessing in the ministered word during my absence. The Lord has very graciously helped me, and I feel the change of air benefits me. My dear brother, I am still in the battle, and still find deep need of the whole armour of God and the blessed Spirit's power and grace to enable me to use it. Pray for me that I may live nearer to, and more upon the fulness of grace there is in Jesus. We are not straitened in Him; He is a place of broad rivers and streams. I have been favoured with more time than usual over the Word. I fear I neglect some things I ought to attend to through grudging time taken from that blessed book. I trust you are all as well as usual. We join in love to you, Mrs. Lenton, and all your family; also to the dear people of God at Clifton Chapel. There is a great famine of the Word in this city. I have found some truly gracious people here who know the joyful sound. At Bristol I had a crowd and a most warm reception. I hope, if God will, I shall see you next Wednesday evening.

Believe me, yours very affectionately in the Gospel,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. C. Lenton.

Putney Heath, August 27, 1873.

My very dear Friend and Brother in the Gospel of Rich Grace,—The Lord brought us safely to London on Friday. I found myself a good deal hindered from preaching with freedom on Lord's Day morning, but from what I have heard since, the sermon appears to have been made a blessing to several. One young man told me he was on the edge of despair, and was about to give up all further attempt at seeking the Lord; but this sermon had been made quite a new start for him. In the evening God was very gracious to me at the voice of my cry, and helped me to exalt a precious Jesus with some sweet liberty of soul. I was very poorly with a bilious attack on Monday and Tuesday, but on Tuesday evening I found it good to preach Jesus, and an excellent gathering was present. Most warm and kind has been my reception here. These dear people seem to me to increasingly love the truth. We are to read after dinner upon the various ways in which the Scriptures speak of Christian perfection. A most important subject; may we get much blessing out of it. I hope you found the Lord's help and blessing with you on Lord's day and Tuesday evening. My heart is with you. May the Lord bless us each with more grace, a clearly read title, an active life, a fruitful soul, and foretastes of heaven. How desirable! I am so glad to have given me the quiet room which I have formerly so much enjoyed here. May the Lord make it a Bochim for my sins and shortcomings, a Bethel by His presence, and a Bethlehem by my feeding upon Jesus. It is proposed that the dear

aged pilgrims should come here (D.V.) next Wednesday; may we, if spared, meet in the name of Jesus. The Lord is at work in this neighbourhood amongst the great in this world. A baroness is in deep distress about her soul. Mrs. D—— visited her, and gave her a book to read, which God has blessed to her husband, Baron H——. He is brought to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and is full of love and zeal. God still calls souls at Gower Street. A servant girl turned in promiscuously; the Word was with power to her wounding, and she has since found healing. Pray for the Lord's power to be put forth amongst us at Clifton. May we who have some light be enabled more fully to surrender ourselves to the Lord, that He may use us for His glory. Give our love to dear Mrs. Lenton, to S——, and to all. Pray for me, my very dear brother, and believe me,

Yours in Christian affection,

S. SEARS.

TO THE GATHERED PEOPLE AT CLIFTON CHAPEL.

MY DEAR, KIND FRIENDS,—The rough weather on Thursday evening caused our thanksgiving gathering to be very thin. For myself I feel overwhelmed in looking back at two things: first, my own extreme unworthiness and unprofitableness; and, secondly, God's amazing goodness to me and to you. O that you may all melt with contrition and gratitude while you sing, after the reading of this—

"For mercies countless as the sands."

This morning I have been encouraged to hope we may

yet clear the debt, and stay the interest without going on another half year. Our kind friend, Mrs. N—— has sent me a cheque for £7 10s. as a thankoffering from herself, her husband, Miss N—— and two children. "This," she says, "I hope is a thankoffering for the Lord's goodness to us this harvest." If it accord with the mind of God may all be stirred up at once to sweep away this debt. We know not how soon we may be called away. May we leave all connected with this chapel free of debt, and O may we bequeath to posterity prayers that shall be answered from generation to generation. The Lord bless you all, and richly bless His Word to your souls, is the desire of,

Yours affectionately,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. H——.

Clifton, Biggleswade, January 5, 1876.

My dear Friend,—I am much pleased to have received a line from you. I heard of your being ill. I trust you are recovering, and that you may be long spared and helped to proclaim the precious Gospel of the grace of God. Thanks for your very kind words. I feel that the few who love the great doctrines of grace, and who know and contend for their power, should seek to hang together.

* * * * * *

I am quite sure the grand Bible doctrine of eternal justification is in perfect harmony with the Scripture doctrine of justification by faith; and it is sad when

leaders of others do not see and feel that harmony. I have great hope that the neglected doctrine of justification by faith will have come into greater prominence by means of the attack upon my sermon; and if such should be the case, it will be a clear gain to the Church.

The Lord has greatly encouraged me by giving me much help in preaching His Word, and giving, through the *Sower*, blessing that I might never have known but for these adverse winds.

We want some Thursday in May to have our annual services (D.V.). Do you think you could help us? The friends were pleased to have you last year. Please answer this soon. I am partially laid up with a bronchial cold. May the Lord make this a year of special blessing to your soul, and in your ministry. My days on earth are rapidly wasting. I enter to-day my fifty-eighth year. I feel much diminution of strength of late. May I live more than ever for eternity. A dying day is much on my mind—

> "Other refuge have I none,
> Hangs my helpless soul on Thee,"

is my experience. My wife joins me in Christian love to you. Give my love to Mrs. T—— when you see her.

Yours affectionately,

S. SEARS.

TO THE CHURCH AND CONGREGATION AT CLIFTON CHAPEL.

Clifton, January 16, 1876.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—I have been all the week hoping that, by confinement to the house and the use of means,

my chest might be sufficiently freed from the fixed cold and cough I have had for some time to enable me to come to you to day; but am in this matter disappointed. If I were to attempt to come out this morning and speak to you, I fear the penalty might be some weeks of silence. If you feel disappointed, I assure you I quite share in your feeling, for although feeble health and many engagements in attempting to spread the truth hinder my seeing you in your own houses, I love to see you gathered in the house God has given us for His worship, and for the declaration of His blessed gospel. I am often greatly tried in soul in connection with the ministry of the truth, and feel how short I come of what I would be as a herald of the good news of salvation. Still I love the work, and find it a trial to be silenced. I have every hope I shall see you if the Lord will, and speak His word to you next Lord's day. May the Lord richly bless His word read to you, and give you a spirit of fervent prayer, and then I am sure you will have no reason to lament my absence. Where two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus, there is He in their midst. O may you realise this, and then you will have the great Master of Assemblies with you. Solomon's presence is infinitely beyond the presence of one of his cup-bearers.

I hope as my years increase, my desire to be a blessing among you in no way decreases. Pray for those who at present are hearers only, especially for the young. Pray for seeking, coming souls; their fears are many; but how full is the Word of God of encouragement against their fears! Pray for the afflicted and the aged. May their last days be their best days. Accept, dear friends,

these expressions of sincere affection for you, and believe me to be what I am thankful to be,

Your affectionate pastor and friend,

S. SEARS.

P.S.—Pray that I may be with you next Lord's day in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.

To Miss Crosby.

Clifton, Biggleswade, Jan. 18, 1876.

My dear Friend,—I was much pleased to get your letter, and felt it very sweet to read of the way in which you were led to see Jesus the way. O may the Spirit of God give you precious faith to deal with God as a Father through His dear Son. No man cometh unto the Father but by Jesus. He who never comes to God this way will find God a Judge to say, Depart, not a Father to welcome.

The state of many in our day is something appalling. I have felt as if nailed round with the Word of God, and then shot at. This has blunted the arrows; they cannot reach me. I have, however, suffered much through the whole thing. I am laid up just now with a sort of chronic bronchitis. I thought of your dear mother this morning, and wondered if it would terminate as hers did. May I leave all in His hands who is "too wise to err," and oh, "too good to be unkind."

Will you give my love to Mr. and Mrs. M——, also to Mr. B——. May the Lord grant you the desire of your heart, leading you on to the sweet assurance of His love to you in Jesus. With our united Christian love,

Yours sincerely,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. C. Lenton.

3, *Church Street, Bath, March* 30, 1876.

My very dear Brother,—By the great and undeserved mercy of God I am here, and fixed in very comfortable lodgings quite in the warm part of Bath. I already feel benefited except being rather tired. O that I may get the double blessing of health of body and health of soul while here! I have generally found help in preaching the Word in this city. I hope Mr. —— will get the light and grace he needs for the work of Sunday, and that you will get a blessing. I have found the excitement of the journey and arrangements about apartments rather distracting to the mind. Alas! how easily our minds wander from the only subject worth earnest meditation. Jesus is an everlasting and ever-blessed fountain. O for the constant actings of the power of the Holy Ghost enabling us to draw from that blessed fountain of all good! I am glad to find Mr. and Mrs. G—— are here. I trust we shall get some profitable meetings over the Book and at the throne. I trust your cold is not renewed again. Give our love to Mrs. Lenton and

all the family. Our love to the dear people of God who inquire of us at the chapel.

I am yours very affectionately,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. Lenton.

3, *Church Street, Bath, April* 6, 1876.

My very dear Brother,—I thank you much for your kind letter, and shall be glad, when we meet, to find your cold quite gone. I was remarkably helped on Sunday! but caught a cold, which is, I hope, now passing away. A kind Christian friend, a doctor, is being, I hope, useful to me. I feel still the change is doing me good, but I cannot feel willing to stay from you and all the dear people at Clifton longer than to the end of next week; many thanks to you all for your kind thought. I have seen the pamphlet. Pray that it may do good and not harm. O, that all this trial might be a blessing! The Lord knows what is best for us. The Lord's people here speak as if they had a feast of fat things on Sunday. A Captain H—— is here from Canada. He seems to have been much tried, and says the blessing he got on Sunday was worth coming from Canada to England for.

The Lord make us of that spirit with which He will dwell. I long to return to you filled with the Spirit. Give my love to Mrs. Lenton, and S——. Greet the friends by name. My wife joins me in this.

I am, yours very affectionately,

S. SEARS.

To Mrs. Maxwell.

Clifton, Biggleswade, September 14, 1876.

My dear, kind Friend,—I thank you very warmly for your kind help to me in my work. I shall give half for coals and the other half to School, Printing, and Orphan Fund. A poor orphan that I have had for ten years is just going out as an apprentice. . . . . I am going (D.V.) to Bath next month. I much enjoy a few friends there, especially the Hoblyns. I am very unwell. Often think my work is drawing to a close. May the Lord keep me faithful unto death. This is indeed a sad age, but I am thankful to have been able to give an unvarying, however feeble testimony to the whole truth. My wife joins me in warm Christian love.

Yours sincerely, in the grand old gospel of grace,

S. SEARS.

P.S.—I often think of the elder's dream. He heard a voice from heaven calling his aged pastor to glory. "Come along there's nae strife here." "What must it be to be there?"

"O that my ship were safe at shore,
Lodged in the port where Jesus is,
Where winds and waves distress no more,
And every tide's a tide of peace."

To Mrs. Maxwell.

Clifton, Biggleswade, March 20, 1877.

My dear Friend,—I must not let pass the pleasure of sending a note to you in answer to your letter,

although you so kindly give me a discharge. I thank you much for your kind words. The Lord graciously stirs up many to write me words of encouragement, and enables me to go on in His work through *evil report* and through *good report.* I have long had more than my due of the latter, and now with respect to the recent charges against me, I have more than my due of the former. I am seeking grace daily to commit myself to Him that judgeth righteously. I have had ten or twelve weeks of neuralgia; but having taken iron and quinine, and had five teeth extracted, am now by God's mercy free from pain. I have been able to preach the Word every Sunday. At times I have been remarkably helped. I am now getting nice nights, for me; having fewer attacks of heart-difficulty. The Lord hears the prayers of His dear people. The friends here are remarkably united and loving. I send you a few of their kind letters; a flask of oil to pour on the agitated waters. The Lord who made a little salt cure the bitter waters can use this little flask of oil to still a turbulent ocean of strife. I hope I am not now greatly excited about the matter. At one time, with feebleness of frame, pain in the face and head, and a struggling heart that sometimes could hardly pursue its course, I felt, so to speak, "smashed up." Our love in our one hope and help—a precious Christ.

Yours in the rich Gospel,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. C. Lenton.

7, *Euston Grove, Euston Square, April* 23, 1877.

My dear and highly-esteemed Brother in Jesus, —I am writing a hurried line to tell you I am still better than when I left home, and thus have cause to speak well of His name in whom is all our hope. I felt yesterday morning enabled to preach the Gospel with freedom, but not with *great sweetness* to my own feelings. In the evening I was singularly helped, so that I not only could speak freely, but sweetly enjoyed the truth I preached to others. May it have been abundantly owned of God. The attendance was good, especially in the evening. A gentleman came in in the evening who had heard Mr. —— in the morning. He said it pained him to hear Mr. —— speak of love when he was showing the contrary. I am anticipating seeing you all again (D.V.). I find I cannot get away before Thursday at the earliest. Excuse a hurry; we are just going out. Our love to Mrs. Lenton and S——. Much to yourself, from yours affectionately,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. C. Lenton.

Nottingham, July 4, 1877.

My very dear Brother,—My mind has been running out towards you this morning, and I feel inclined to let my feelings vent themselves on paper. By the good hand of God upon us, we were brought here in safety on Friday after staying two nights at Loughborough. I found the Word was warmly received by a few at Loughborough,

and have found the ——— family about as I expected. I was able to speak much to them of the great desirableness of their being the living who lay it to heart. I should rejoice indeed to see them all made earnest to be right for eternity. What is worth an earnest thought compared with the safety and well-being of the soul! I feel as I approach eternity, more and more the emptiness and unsatisfying nature of everything short of Jesus. He is indeed the one thing needful and the altogether lovely. I went to preach on Sunday with a tottering heart; but was greatly helped, especially in the morning. I read the first of Habakkuk and dwelt upon the fact that Israel's barrenness, and the failure of her efforts for fruitfulness, may often be traced to some evil indulged, or some spiritual sloth and neglect of God's Word. Read the chapter with this thought. I trust you found savour and power in the testimony of Mr. B——. We enjoyed our intercourse with him much. I hope Mr. H—— may be much aided and be made a blessing. He is one I have long loved . . . . . I have taken a fresh cold this week, but not a very bad one. May the blessing of the Lord be very abundantly yours. Give my love to Mr. Farrer and any of the dear people to whom you may speak, also to Mr. H——.

I am, yours very affectionately,
S. SEARS.

To Mrs. Maxwell.

Clifton, Biggleswade, Aug. 13, 1877.

My dear Friend,—I am just pencilling a word that you may know I am ill, and may join with other dear

friends at the throne of grace for me. I was seized on the 6th with what seemed like death from heart affection. I had to all appearance the rattle in the chest usual in death, for three or four hours. In the midst of it my heart melted with the love of Jesus. The hymn,

"Jesus is precious saith the Word,"

expresses my feelings. I felt His work was my foundation. My heart has gone out in love to all His dear people. The doctor thinks I must not attempt to preach again. Give my Christian love to Captain S——, to your lady friend, I forget her name, and to the C——s when you see them. Please write to our dear friend Mrs. S——; my Christian love to her. The Lord help her to look to and hang upon Jesus. He is trustworthy; I proved Him so.

Pray that my feeble faith may by the might of the Spirit keep her hold of Jesus. My safety lies in His hold of me, but I love the comfort that comes from hanging upon Him. My wife's love.

Yours affectionately,

S. SEARS.

To Mrs. P——.

Clifton, Biggleswade, Aug. 15, 1877.

My dear Friend,—I am pencilling a few lines from my bed to ask you to thank, with kind Christian remembrances, Miss B——, for writing to me in your stead. May the Lord soon heal your eye. How valuable are the senses. I have of late years often been

led to thank God for continuing to me the senses, such desirable inlets to the mind, and means of outlet for us while in the body. On this bed my affections having been anew stirred towards Jesus; they have gone out towards His dear people. When for a few hours I seemed in death's cold embrace, I felt I had Jesus in my arms of faith, and love, and trust. I had the sweetest melting sense of love to Jesus that I have had for some time. I have had some moments of conflict since, but the Lord holds me to this,

"Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

You and your dear sister, with me and all of us who are descending the hill of life, must come soon to the river without a bridge. But, very dear friends, Jesus is most trustworthy. He will fulfil to you His own word of promise, "as thy days so shall thy strength be." I felt, when I seemed so near eternity, I could freely forgive all who had misrepresented and persecuted me. I had no doubt that what I had preached was the truth that will stand for ever. I said to dear Lenton, "My sin-stained work is done." "The work of Jesus is not sin-stained. That is my trust."

I am now obliged to be almost always alone; no excitement does for me. The doctor thinks I shall not preach again. I propose giving up for six months, and awaiting the Lord's will. I trust to be able to go on with the little magazines.

My dear wife had a great shock. I think the friends round gave me up from six or seven till ten or eleven in the evening of the 6th.

We join in christian love to you and Miss M——. My mind was quite clear during the attack.

Yours affectionately in the Gospel,

S. SEARS.

To Mrs. Maxwell.

Clifton, Biggleswade, Sep. 5, 1877.

My dear, kind Friend in the Gospel of Christ, —Your loving gift in the name of our only hope, Jesus, is to hand. I thank you very much for it, also for your kind, warm letter, so full of Christian feeling. Thank very much your kind servant for her bounty to me. I begin soon about myself, but I know you are wanting to hear how I am. By the great mercy of God I am better these two days than I have been yet. I think the rest, living by rule, and taking a tonic, have together been most useful. There is still, every now and then, indeed often most minutes, the feeling of embarrassment and the struggle of the heart to right itself after the regurgitation of blood, through the valve not closing properly. I quite hope, however, that with a winter's cessation from preaching, I may by the mercy of God again be allowed to use my voice in proclaiming the Gospel. I went out yesterday for more than an hour in a little basket carriage, and am hoping to go again to-day. I hope to get medical leave to go to Brighton about a week next Monday, where my dear, kind, and skilful friend, Dr. Corfe, proposes to be my janitor and physician. The goodness of God to me is great. It

amazes me. If I believed more in grace, the display of His goodness would perhaps more confirm my expectations than surprise me. Shall not a God of infinite grace act in character with Himself? And shall not a God of large promises show Himself a God of great faithfulness? Your faith taking a prophetic form is encouraging. I am glad you found a few words of mine helpful. Any one who knows what it is so much to need help himself is glad to be a means of help to others. How kind of dear Mrs. S——! She is one who comes to Christ, and hangs upon the faithful word, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out," though often tempted to loose her hold. She will find Christ and His promise will bear the strain of the last strife. Give my love to her when you write. Mrs. D—— has written me twice most kindly. . . . . With *very great* economy I might now nearly live without pecuniary help, but I incur expenses through my state of health, and must have changes; and if even I should ever preach again, I think when I go out it must be chiefly for rest, not for preaching, and this is expensive. I think the Lord is moving His people to just supply these needs. Mr. Lenton, a precious man of God, is much pleased with his success at present. I am myself, by the goodness of God, thus far very free from anxiety about these temporal matters. I feel as if I can talk thus freely with you, because I look upon you as a sort of mother in Israel. May the blessed Spirit daily take of the things of Jesus and show them unto us. Nothing gives a heart too hot and high for some temptations, and too low and humble for others, like a spiritual, loving, appropriating view of Jesus and His rich, blessed work. (Read Isa. xxx.) See

in it, first, Israel, past, present, and future; and then see the backsliding soul, the chastened soul, and the restored soul.—Yours in Christian love,

S. SEARS.

To Mrs. P——.

23, *Hamilton Road, Brighton, September* 24, 1877.

My dear Friend in the Gospel,—I thank you for your kind note. I am sorry your eye still tries you. How precious are the senses, especially that of sight. O that our spiritual senses may be made and kept healthy. To *see* the King in His beauty, to *hear* His voice, to *smell* the savour of His good ointment, to handle and *feel* Him and His things, and to *taste* His love—how desirable! A body that neither sees, nor hears, nor smells, nor feels, nor tastes, must either be dead or terribly diseased; and the same thing is true of a soul. May we not only have spiritual life, but health, and the vigorous use of our spiritual senses.

We are both, by the goodness of God, deriving benefit from this change. The *effects* of my late attack upon my health are much removed, but the *cause* remains. I have to be so very cautious in my movements, and have to avoid excitement. One thing, and that a thing that much pleases me, is against me. I cannot go out without meeting people who know me, and naturally they stop to talk a little.

May the Lord much bless you and your dear sister. I am reading with much interest the inspired Pilgrim's Progress, I mean the Book of Numbers. I want two

things in the sixth chapter: first, Nazarite *separation*, and consecration to the Lord in the power of the Holy Ghost, and secondly, the Priestly benediction. I believe more of the former in reality leads to more of the latter in realisation. "If ye keep My commandments ye shall abide, &c." (Read all John xiv., xv. and xvi.)

My wife joins me in Christian love to you both. Mr. Lenton sends me some of the sweet letters of affectionate sympathy he gets. The Lord has wonderfully inclined His servants to go to Clifton. We have now supplies to the end of the year, excepting for one Lord's day.

I am, yours in Christian affection,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. H——.

Clifton, Biggleswade, October 24, 1877.

My dear Friend in the Gospel of rich grace, —Since I have been in the furnace of affliction, I have often thought I should like to write to you. My strength has been small, and my necessary work has been quite enough to require it all. I assure you, I have had you in my heart all through. At the beginning of this affliction, when heart and flesh seemed failing, the Lord Jesus made Himself very dear to me. The sting of death was gone, and I tested the truth of that word, "There is no fear in love." . . . . I felt in seeming death, what I have all along felt, that the charges against me have been false; but I could freely forgive. O may the Lord bring poor —— into the dust, and lead him a penitent sinner to the cross. I often thought of you while I was

in Brighton, and wished you might be led that way while I was there. I hope (D.V.) to go there again for a month from November 20th. I found benefit from my stay, with regard to my general health, but the action of the heart is not much better. I had a painful attack on Monday evening. I am not without hope that I may again be led to preach the Word. My dear friend Lenton is receiving many most cheering proofs of love and sympathy from all quarters. The Lord overwhelms me with proofs of His goodness to one so vile and unworthy.

I hope you and your family are kept in health. My wife joins me in love to you. May the Lord strengthen, help, and bless you in the work to which He has called you.—I am, yours affectionately,

S. SEARS.

To Mrs. Maxwell.

Clifton, Biggleswade, November 1, 1877.

My dear, kind Christian Friend,—Thanks for your kind consideration of the poor. "Such a one as you can certainly divine." I have for two or three days been tried that the stream of charity to those whom God has helped through me seemed dried up. I have prayed the Lord to open it again, and to you He has granted the honour of leading the way in His gracious answering of prayer. May yours be indeed the blessing of the considerers of the poor. God has brought me home benefited much in health, but the action of the heart is still such that I can bear no exertion or excitement

The Lord graciously refreshes me in reading His word and helps me in preparing the *Sower*, &c. . . . . Dr. Corfe seems to have much fear whether I shall preach again. If at all he seems to think it will not be much. I gather this from a letter of his to Mr. Lenton. Mr. Lenton has had what he calls a touching and sweet employment to open so many letters of tender love and sympathy . . . . . My love to Mr. S—— when you write, also to Mr. and Mrs. H——.

Yours in grace bonds,

S. SEARS.

P.S.—I have to day finished in bed preparing sermon for December *Sower*. "The Leaning Guest." The lines "Art thou at the feet of Jesus," were written with feeling a few weeks after the late attack. May the Lord bless them to many, enabling them to read their election and infer their glorification.

To Mr. B——.

Monteville Hotel, 34, *West Street*,
Brighton, *Nov.* 22, 1877.

My dear Friend,—We are brought here in safety. I trust you will be taken safely to Clifton, and much helped while there. I am as well as I can expect to be after the fatigue of travelling yesterday. You will remember you can get a nice quiet time in my room, where you will find a fire, in addition to a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick. A young woman

will get your fire who is a Christian, but even Christians are not always considerate about a minister. Do not mind telling her you want to be alone, so that you hope she will leave you the house to yourself.

I expect the friends will only be able to give you ——. I therefore enclose you a small cheque, which will be a little increase upon what they give you for next Sunday, and the other twice we expect you.

From the pulpit will you give my love to the people, and tell them how much I desire the privilege of again speaking to them the Word of God, if the Lord will. In the meanwhile I am thankful they keep together; and hope they will not only still pray for me, but also for each one of the Lord's servants who may be sent to them, and for themselves that they may get a blessing by means of all that is Scriptural and gracious, that they hear from the different ministers, bearing with any non-essential shade of difference in thought and expression, and never getting into the Corinthian spirit, "I am for Paul, and I for Apollos." With our Christian love,

Yours affectionately,

S. SEARS.

To Mr. C. Lenton.

34, *West Street, Brighton, November*, 1877.

My very dear Friend and Brother in our one and blessed hope,—I thank you much for your letter, and rejoice with you that your soul has been feeding upon the Lord Jesus. He is the bread which strengtheneth

the heart. His atoning blood is the wine that cheereth the heart of God and man. Oh, for more of communion with the Father in feasting on Him in whom He is ever well pleased. Your letter was of use to me in making me more dissatisfied with being at a distance from Jesus, and more anxious after nearness to Him. The Lord is most gracious to me. I feel this change is really being used for good to my frame. I do trust the Lord has not cast me out of His vineyard, but that I shall yet use my voice to extol the Lord Jesus, and to invite poor burdened sinners to Him. I will now write a little message for the people :—

"My dear Friends,—Accept the love of your unworthy minister, and go on to pray that the Lord will graciously allow him again to preach among you the unsearchable riches of Christ, not forgetting to thank Him that His blessing has so far attended the change I am now taking as to give me more hope of being restored, so as to use my voice in His service, than I have yet had since that solemn, yet blessed sixth of August. May the Lord help you much to pray for His servants who preach the Word to you, and give you much profit by their varied gifts, and bless you each for time and eternity, is the sincere desire of one who long held amongst you an office he prays God to restore him to, that of

"Your affectionate pastor,

"S. SEARS."

To Mr. C. Lenton.

34, *West Street, Brighton, December* 6, 1877.

My very dear Friend and Brother,—Since I last wrote to you I have been again discouraged, but yesterday and to-day am getting forward again. Dr. Corfe told me yesterday he had never had so much hope that I should preach again. May the Lord show Himself in this case the hearer and answerer of prayer. It is very kind of you to write to me; I am always pleased to hear from you. My thoughts are very much with you and the people who gather at Clifton Chapel. The Lord conform us all more and more by His grace and Spirit to His will expressed in His holy Word, and exemplified in His dear Son, our hope. We feel a love to Mr. —— and enjoy his ministry more than that of some others, but there is a general deficiency of *searching* and distinct proclamation of the whole truth. What need to pray the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest, and that He will guide all His sent servants into all truth, and enable them to preach it with power and grace. . . . . Give my love to Mrs. Lenton and S——, and any of the Lord's people you may speak with. Perhaps I had better again write a little message to the people :—

"My dear Friends,—Although I have been a little thrown back for a day or two, I ask an interest in your thanksgiving for improvement. Dr. Corfe says he has never seen so much reason to hope as now that I may eventually again preach the Word. Still pray for me, and pray for the servants of the Lord who minister to you during my absence. May God make His word through

them a word of life to the dead, of freedom to the fettered, and of true reviving to all the flock of God. Accept my love to you, and my sympathy with you in the trial that has come upon you in my affliction, and believe me,

"Yours to serve in the Gospel,

"As God may enable and lead,

"S. SEARS."

To Mr. C. Lenton.

34, *West Street, Brighton, December* 1877.

My very dear Brother in the Gospel,—As I have done rather too much to-day I will only write a few lines. I know your kind, loving heart is cheered by any good tidings about your unworthy brother. I believe I may still give you a good report of my returning health. I find a very little thing is too much for me; at the same time I quite feel to be gradually gaining ground. The Lord is very gracious. I have been able rather often to hear Mr. ——, and feel quite a union to him. I should be glad if he were always very distinct in urging the necessity of faith in the Lord Jesus. I heard Mr. —— on Sunday evening; it was most deficient. Our love to you, Mrs. Lenton, and Sarah. I will write again a little message to the people:—

"My dear friends in the Gospel,—I have you as a people in daily remembrance, and like once a week to give you a short expression of my love to you in the Gospel. I am thankful, dear friends, that while I am silent, others of the Lord's servants are sent to preach His truth to you, and

pray that their labours may be greatly blessed to you all, both young and old. What an everlasting mercy it will be if my laying aside has made way for ministers whom God will bless to be the means of the conversion of the souls of the unconverted! May such indeed be the case. May you who are seeking find, and you who have found be made fruitful. I feel I am better, and hope I shall yet be able again to speak the Word, if only a little. I hope to see you all again (D.V.) next week, but my good doctor thinks as the change is being made a blessing, I ought to be in no hurry to return. The Lord guide all for His glory. The blessing of the Lord be upon you and His minister when this shall be read. I bless you in the name of the Lord, and remain,

"Yours affectionately,

"S. SEARS."

To Mr. C. Lenton.

34, *West Street, Brighton, December* 19, 1877.

My dear, dear Friend and Brother in the Gospel,—Your cheque has reached me safely, for which I thank you. . . . . I am just now shut in with a cold on the chest, attended with a good deal of cough. I do not think the heart is worse. I hope in a day or two this all will be passing away. When I left you I hoped I should see you again to-day. It does appear, however, that it is best for me to stay a little longer. Possibly in a fortnight from this time I may return. Oh that I may return in the power of the Spirit. I am glad the friends

like a little word from me. If the Lord will, I hope some time to have the privilege of using my voice to them again. May the Lord help you this evening, and grant that you may meet in the name of Jesus, who is always present in such a meeting. God has graciously raised you up for such a time as this. I hope you found it good to hear the Word through Mr. B——. Give my love to Mr. ——. I have told him to write to you if he should want your help. Our love to you each, to —— when he comes home, and to all of you at your family gathering at Christmas.—Yours very affectionately,

S. SEARS.

TO THE CONGREGATION AT CLIFTON CHAPEL.

Brighton, December 19, 1877.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—Hearing from Mr. Lenton that you are glad from Sunday to Sunday to get a word from me, I write to you again, assuring you of my love for you and my interest in your spiritual well-being. Many of you I look upon as my children in the faith of Christ, and though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers. And I may say, though I have had ten thousands of hearers and readers, I have only a portion of spiritual children amongst them. May the Lord help you to love as brethren, and keep you from falling out by the way, and ever bring you under the Word preached in my absence, with thankful hearts that He sends His servants to you, and with a true spirit of supplication that the Saviour will be with them, and let

His own voice be heard through them. O that many amongst the congregation seeking Jesus may truly find Him! May wanderers be brought back, and may poor graceless sinners, young and old, know the quickening power of God. I am still better, and have much hope that I may yet be enabled to proclaim the Gospel amongst you. The Lord bless you and all His dear servants whom He may send amongst you, is the sincere desire of your loving friend—and pastor when the Lord shall please,

S. SEARS.

W. H. & L. Collingridge, 128 and 129, Aldersgate Street, London, E.C.

ERRATA.

The attention of the reader is called to the following typographical errors which have been observed in the foregoing pages:—Page 117, first line; page 118, fourteenth line from top, and also seventh line from bottom; page 123, sixth line; page 127, second line. In each of the above-mentioned places, for Sears's read *Sears'*. Page 126, sixth line, for later read *latter*.